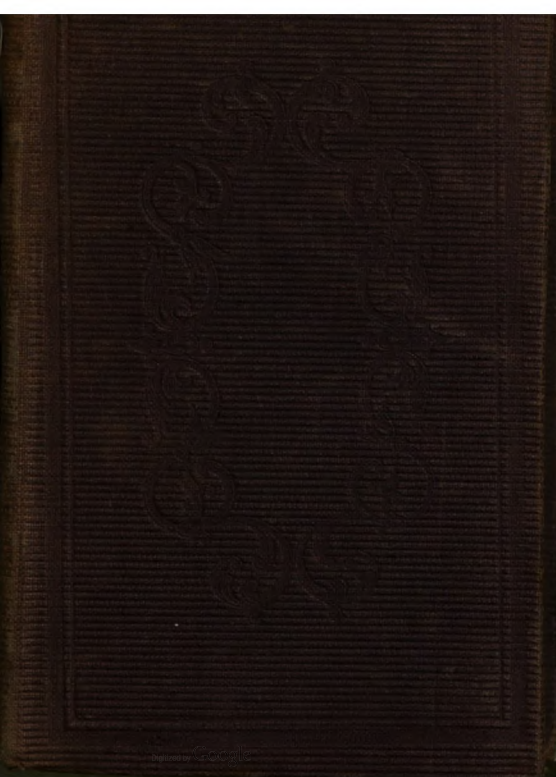

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**BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL
GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.**

PERSUASIVES
TO
EARLY PIETY
BY J. G. PIKE.



DERBY:
PUBLISHED BY THOMAS RICHARDSON.

1841.

1578/8439



PREFACE.

THIS *Abridgment* of "**PERSUA-
SIVES TO EARLY PIETY,**" is parti-
cularly designed for Sabbath
Schools, and for benevolent per-
sons who give away religious
publications, and who find a book
of this size most suitable for their
purpose. It should however be
understood, that this volume does
not contain more than *half* the
original work, which, besides
being superior in other respects,
is interspersed with prayers and

meditations, adapted to the state of mind referred to in various chapters.

The original work, in a much larger print, is sold by the publishers of this in a neat 12mo. volume, at 4s. extra boards; and in 18mo. at 2s. 6d.

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PERSUASIVES
TO
EARLY PIETY.

I. — INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG
READER.

MY dear young friend, if a person could rise from the dead to speak to you, how attentively would you listen to his discourse, and how much would you be affected by it! Yet a messenger from the dead could not tell you more important things, than those to which I now beseech you to attend. I come to ask you to give your heart to GOD; I come to invite you to follow the divine REDEEMER *now*; I come to entreat you to walk in the pleasant path of early piety. O that I could, with all the fervour of a dying man, beseech you to attend to your only great concerns! — It is not to a trifle that I call your attention, but to your life, your eternal all, your God, your Saviour, your heaven, your every thing, that is worth a thought. Do not let a stranger be more anxious than yourself for your eternal wel-



fare. If you have been thoughtless hitherto, be serious now. It is time you were so. You have wasted years enough. Think of Sir Francis Walsingham's words, "While we laugh, all things are serious around us. God is serious who preserves us, and has patience towards us; Christ is serious who shed his blood for us; the Holy Spirit is serious when he strives with us; the whole creation is serious in serving God and us; all are serious in another world; how suitable then is it for man to be serious! and how can we be gay and trifling?" Do you smile at this grave address? O think that those who laughed at these solemn truths, when they were first delivered now laugh no more! The friendly warning may be neglected, and the truths of the Bible disbelieved, but death and eternity will soon force on the most careless heart a deep conviction, that religion is the one thing needful.

Yes, my young friend, "One thing is needful;" so said the Lord of life—needful to you, to me, to all. The living neglect it, but the dead know its value. Every saint in heaven feels the worth of religion, through partaking of the blessing to which it leads; and every soul in hell knows its value by its want. It is only on earth that triflers are to be found; and will you be one of them? God forbid!

Read, I beseech you, this little book with serious prayer. Remember that it is your welfare which is sought. I wish you to be happy here, and, when time is past, happy for ever. I plead with you a more important cause than was ever conducted before an earthly judge. Not one which concerns time only, but which concerns eternity. Not one on which a little wealth or reputation depends; but one with which your eternal poverty or eternal riches, eternal glory or eternal shame, a smiling or a frowning God, an eternal heaven or an eternal hell, are all connected. And it is your cause I plead and not my own, and shall I plead your cause to yourself in vain? O may God forbid that I should!

I know, my young friend, how apt we are to read the most serious calls as if they were mere formal things, of little more consequence than the trifles recorded in a newspaper; but read, I entreat you, what follows, as a serious message which I have from God for you; and let such considerations as the following persuade you to attend.

Consider what will be your thoughts of the advice here given you a hundred years hence. Long before that time, you will have done with this world for ever. Then, your now vigorous and youthful body will be turned to dust; yet your immortal soul will

be living in another world; and far more sensible of joy or grief than it can possibly be now. Then what will you think of this friendly warning? How happy will you be if you have followed the advice it contains! Fancy not that it will be then forgotten, Calls and mercies forgotten *here* must be remembered *there*. If now you think me over-earnest, you will not then entertain the same opinion. If you now slight this humble effort for promoting your salvation, and carelessly or contemptuously throw this book aside, or read it and forget it, then, if ten thousand worlds were yours, they would appear but a trifle, for another season of salvation, like that you now enjoy; and which perhaps you now waste; but now is *your* day of grace, then another generation will have theirs.

Think again that while you are reading this, thousands are rejoicing in heaven, that they, in past years, attended to such earnest calls. Once they were as careless as you may have been, but divine grace disposed them to listen to the word of life. They regarded the warnings addressed to them; they found salvation; they are gone to rest; and now with what pleasure do they recollect the fervent sermon, or the little book, that, under God, first impressed their hearts. About one hundred and fifty years ago, a

gentleman went into the shop of a Mr. Boulter, a London bookseller, to inquire for some plays. Mr. Boulter told him he had none; but showed him Mr Flavel's treatise of "Keeping the Heart;" and assured him that it would do him more good than plays. The gentleman said, "What a fanatic was he who made this book!" Mr. Boulter advised him to read it. He bought it, but said he would not read it. "What will you do with it then?" said the friendly bookseller. "I will tear and burn it," said he. Mr. Boulter told him then he should not have it. Upon this the gentleman promised to read it. About a month after, he went again and spoke to Mr. Boulter to this effect, "I most heartily thank you for putting this book into my hands—I bless God that moved you to do it—blessed be God that ever I came into your shop!" and then he bought a hundred more, to give to those who could not buy them. How much happier now is he than he would have been, if he had continued the same thoughtless creature as he was, when he entered the bookseller's shop! Now, though to us his name is unknown, we have reason to believe he forms one of the company above; but had he continued to waste his fleeting years, he might, in hopeless misery, have been wishing in vain for those precious hours he

PERSUASIVES TO

had wasted on plays, and romances, and novels. Had he slighted good Mr. Boulter's advice, he might now in hell have been lamenting his folly. Yes, think that while you are reading this little book, millions of wretched souls, in utter darkness and despair, are cursing that desperate madness, which led them to turn a deaf ear to such friendly warnings, once addressed to them. O my young friend, I beseech you by the joys of saints in heaven, and by the terrors of sinners in hell, trifle not with this affectionate call!

Consider further—If you were going a journey, you would make preparations for it. Would you not if going to travel only one or two hundred miles? and were you thus far from home, would not your thoughts be often there? and if obstructions lay in the way, that threatened to prevent your ever returning, would you not exert all your skill and power to remove them? And are you indeed only going forwards through a little span of time to an eternal world? And there to find an endless abode, amidst the deepest sorrow or the most perfect joy? And do many things unite to hinder you from reaching heaven? Is this the case? Indeed it is. And will you go forward thoughtless whither you are going? Thoughtless of what awaits you on your

entrance into that unseen, unknown, endless world of joy unspeakable, or of grief beyond expression.

Were your soul intrusted to another's care, would you not complain of his cruelty, if you saw one begging him to seek its happiness, and yet perceived him careless whether you were saved or lost? Would you not cry out, "O unhappy creature that I am to have my eternal all intrusted to a wretch so cruel, that he will see me sink into the pit of destruction, to spend a dreary eternity there, rather than give himself any care or concern about my eternal happiness!" Would such be your complaint in this case? O be not then by carelessness more cruel to yourself!

While, therefore, in what follows, I would address you with affectionate earnestness, I once more entreat you seriously to regard the plain, but important truths I shall present to you; and forgive me that I am not earnest enough when speaking to you on things of everlasting consequence. Did we but feel the thousandth part of the worth of an immortal soul, I might abhor myself for writing so coldly, and you blush and be confounded, at having ever needed warning and advice to lead you to seek its welfare. It is impossible to be earnest enough with you: if you ever know the worth of true pi-

ety you will be convinced that it is. Did we see thousands asleep on the brink of a precipice, and some every moment falling and dying, could we too earnestly endeavour to awaken those not yet undone? O my young friend, if you have been a careless trifler with the gospel of Christ, danger infinitely worse, eternal danger threatens you! Awake, awake, I beseech you, awake! Awake, before it is too late! before eternity seals your doom! before God forgets to be gracious! Awake! as in the sight of God, I call on you, awake! Act not the sluggard's part! say not, A little more sleep, a little more slumber! Close not your eyes to sleep in sin again! lest

——— you should shortly feel,
The sleeper sleeps no more in hell.

Awake! I beseech you, and begin to mind that one thing, which is so needful to you, that food is not half so needful to the poor wretch perishing of hunger, nor help to him that is sinking in the waves, or scorching in the flames.

PRAYER FOR YOUNG PERSONS IMPLORING THE
DIVINE BLESSING UPON THEMSELVES WHILE
READING THIS BOOK

Great God, thou seest me, a young and
thoughtless creature. Young as I am in

years, yet I have gone far in sin. So far that thou mightest justly have said with respect to me, "Cut down that cumberer of the ground;" and had that dreadful sentence been long ago pronounced and executed, I must have owned it just. My years are few, but my sins are many; more numerous are they than my days or hours; more countless than the hairs of my head. Alas, blessed God, what a part have I acted! I have received life from thee, and employed it in neglecting and sinning against thee. I might have only seen the light and closed my eyes in death, but thou didst watch over me in infancy, didst guard me in childhood, and hast brought me to the blooming days of youth; and how have I requited thee? Wretch that I have been, to requite thy love with ingratitude, thy goodness with neglect! Foolish creature that I have been, to spend the flower of my years in grieving thee, my best Friend; in pleasing Satan, my infernal foe; and in undoing my own immortal soul! O make me sensible of my sin; teach me to bewail and loathe my folly; and help me to forsake it! Now let me begin to live that life which on a dying bed I shall wish to have lived. Gracious God, thou hast spared me in mercy; let me not be thus mercifully spared in vain; but let my life, which has been too long spent without thee, now be

devoted to thee. Pour out thy Spirit on me, for he alone can teach me what thou art. Give me to thy Son, and thy Son to me. Thou art permitting me in this little book to read a serious invitation to early piety, enable me to regard the truths it teaches; and may I read them with a devote and attentive mind. May the persuasions and motives here presented to me enter my heart; and may I, when I reach the conclusion of this book, be no longer the thoughtless creature I have hitherto been; but may I be found to have chosen that good part, which none can take away. But, ah! great God, what am I that I should speak of reaching the conclusion even of this little book! Though I have read its first pages, I know not that I shall live to read its last. Young and vigorous as I may now be, perhaps, before I can reach its end, my time may be finished; my eyes closed in death; and my soul called to meet thee, my long neglected and much injured God. O then teach me to be wise without delay! Teach me what religion is, and enable me to choose it as my portion. Teach me what I am; and lead me to Jesus Christ, thy once crucified, but now exalted Son. O make me thine! O Saviour, make me thine! O God of glory, make me thine without delay, and teach me all thy will! Then whatever be the means of a

wakening my soul, thine shall be the praise, for it is thy work, and the glory is justly thine.

Hear me, O thou most merciful Father, and wash my sins away in the atoning blood of Christ; hear me, and let my youth from this day be devoted to thee; hear me, for the sake of thy beloved Son: and now to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory and dominion, world without end. *Amen.*

II. — THE FALLEN AND RUINED STATE OF MAN.

I now, my young friend, address you on a subject unspeakably important; as no hope can be entertained of doing you lasting good, till you feel the truth of the statements contained in this chapter: but if you be led, by the Divine Spirit, to perceive that this chapter describes your own condition, there will then be a pleasing prospect, of your becoming acquainted with those things, which belong to your everlasting peace.

In reference to bodily disorders it is said, that to know our disease is half the cure: the same observation will apply to the disorders

of the soul. If one deeply infected with a fever, or the plague, were so deluded as to believe that he enjoyed perfect health, or to think himself at worst, but slightly disordered, and were therefore to neglect the means for restoring health, how soon would death and the grave convince him of his sad mistake! Such a delusion is seldom met with; but an infinitely more dreadful and more mischievous delusion, is as common as the light of day. Perhaps you labour under its baleful influence. Perhaps, if your life has been unstained by flagrant enormities, you imagine yourself a good-hearted young man, or an innocent young woman. Your sins are softened down under the name of youthful follies. The deep corruption of your nature is totally concealed from your view. You are in danger of dying eternally of the worst of plagues, while thinking that all is well. You are exposed to the wrath of a justly offended God, and saying to yourself "Peace, peace!"

Perhaps you exclaim, "Shocking doctrine!" whilst, full of indignation, you are almost ready to throw this book aside, before you have glanced at the proofs afforded in Scripture, for the assertions I have made. If this be the case, I beseech you to remember I appeal to Scripture, not to your passions; to the declarations of God, not to

worldly delusions. You may cry out at the sight of a shroud, a coffin, a grave, " Shocking objects !" but your loudest exclamations will not lessen those awful realities.

Refuse not then to listen to the declarations of God, on this momentous subject; to refuse to hearken to them, is to seal your own destruction.

His word assures you, that every human being is born into this world with a corrupt and sinful nature. Such is the exceeding sinfulness of human nature, that the word of God describes it by declaring that we are "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin." Man is "a transgressor from the womb," and "goes astray speaking lies." "Foolishness is bound" even "in the heart of a child." "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; is only evil and that continually; he is abominable and filthy, and drinketh in iniquity like water." As he advances in life, do his corruptions weaken? The words of the apostle answer No. "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand." And what is the dreadful result of this examination? "Every one of them is gone back;

they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one.

This sinfulness of your nature, is not partial; but like a mortal poison, spreads through and pollutes the whole. The heart which should be the best part of man is now the worst. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "It is full of evil." Not merely tainted but filled with sin, and madness dwells in it. From this corrupt fountain flows as corrupt a stream. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theft, false witness, blasphemies, covetousness, wickedness," or (malevolence,) "deceit, lasciviousness," (or immodesty,) "envy, pride, foolishness," or (levity.) Not merely is the heart thus polluted, but the lusts of men war in their members. The eyes, the ears, the hands, the feet, the lips are all defiled by different sins; and the tongue, that member which was formed peculiarly for its Creator's praise, "is now a world of iniquity, and is set on fire of hell." Such is man: and has he any deeds of righteousness to counterbalance this exceeding sinfulness? O let the evangelical prophet answer. "We are all as an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind have taken us away." So far are our

best actions in our natural state, from helping us, that even they also are polluted and loathsome; and sin like a whirlwind unopposed, sweeps us onward to perdition.

But perhaps you exclaim, "I have not committed many of the sins here named." Perhaps not. I am here showing you your own lost condition, by referring you to those sad fruits which your depraved heart, unless by one means or other prevented, would produce; and which, in millions of cases have been produced. The restraints of education, or other things, may have checked in you some of these corruptions; but this makes no alteration, as to your natural sinfulness. If, in spring, you were to cast one handful of wheat into the ground, and lay another by in a drawer, would you in autumn, say of that which had been laid by, this is not wheat, because it might not have put forth the blade and the ear? No, it would still be wheat, though its situation had prevented its growing. So it is with human nature. In some situations its corruptions may not be so visible as in others; in some situations those corruptions may not have the same nourishment as in others; or may meet with more restraints; like the grain of corn, which is buried so deep that it can scarcely push its blade above the surface of the soil. All this may take place. All this does take

—ce, in thousands of instances, but human nature, in its radical corruption, is every where the same; like wheat which is wheat still, whether it vegetates in the furrow, ripens in the ear, or is treasured up in the barn.

After this general view descend a little into some particulars.

The word of God, in describing your natural condition, represents it as so “extremely sinful,” that while you are in it nothing which you do can be pleasing to God. “They that are in the flesh (under the government of that corruption which is named flesh) cannot please God.” So entire is this corruption, that an apostle confesses, “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” So completely is the soul indisposed by it to all that is really good, that men are “dead in trespasses and sins.” How awful is their delusion, who are strangers to real religion, and yet flatter themselves that there is something good in them to recommend them to God. Their best actions flow from corrupt motives, and are in his sight but a kind of splendid sins.

Man is not only so extremely sinful, that he cannot please God; but so blind, that he is entirely ignorant of what is acceptable in his Maker’s sight. Our Lord himself declares, that the design of his gospel is to open the eyes of men, “and to turn them

from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." He assures us that he came to "preach recovering of sight to the blind." His most distinguished apostle affirms, that even the followers of Christ "were sometime darkness;" that he and they had been "delivered from the power of darkness;" and humbly confesses, "we our ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived," being blinded by those false hopes and delusions, which deceive thousands now. So destructive is this blindness, that men "know not the way of peace." So entire, that the sullen ox and stupid ass know more of their masters, than unenlightened man of his God. "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." So awful is this blindness, that the "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." Even "the preaching of the cross" itself "is to them that perish foolishness." And so wilful that "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;" and, proceeding in their career of madness, "fools make a mock at sin." Is it possible, my young friend, to give a sadder representation of the natural blindness of the heart, than

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these passages give? Sin, which God declares to be the cause of misery, death, and hell, men treat as a matter of mad laughter; while that glorious plan of salvation, which astonishes the angels of heaven, is folly in the view of poor unconverted men. The man who would laugh at a thousand swords aimed at his defenceless head, or pointed at his naked breast, were wiser than he who laughs at sin. Less foolish were the wretch who should treat as folly a plan to deliver him from the condemned cell, the altar, the gibbet, or the fire, than he who thus treats the wondrous plan which God has devised to save him from the flames of hell.

The sacred writers continue the deplorable account of fallen man, by declaring also that he is not only polluted and blind, but under the influence of the worst foe of God and man.—The devil, on account of his extensive reign, is called by them, “the god of this world; the prince of the power of the air;” and he and the wicked spirits that have fallen with him “are the rulers of the darkness of this world.” The ungodly are of their “father the devil; he works in the hearts of the children of disobedience;” he takes away the seed that is sown in the thoughtless heart; he blinds the minds of the irreligious; and where the gospel is hid

it is hid through his influence. They are in "the snare of the devil," and are "led captive by him at his will." They who neglect religion, to follow the world, are "turned aside after Satan;" and lest you should imagine that these deplorable assertions refer merely to the most openly ungodly, you are assured, by the divine Saviour himself, that the design of his gospel is "to bring men from the power of Satan unto God;" and that the tares, or all who are not in reality the children of God, "are the children of the wicked one." The apostle Paul confesses that he and his christian friends once were of this number; the apostle John as solemnly teaches us, that all men are either the children of God or of the devil; and that those who do not practise righteousness, and cherish love, are not of God.

To give a darker finish to this dreadful picture, the word of eternal truth declares, that men are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them; are alienated from God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works; that they know not God; are haters of God; are strangers and foreigners to him; and without God in the world." Hence, in a natural state, "there is none that seeketh after God; there is no fear of God before their eyes." By their

lives, if they dare not utter it with their lips, they say unto God, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" and by choosing worldly vanities in preference to the favour and service of God, they, in fact, utter the dreadful sentence, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" The apostle Paul, in giving the darkest touch to this dreadful picture, declares that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." A more awful description of fallen man cannot be given, than that contained in these few words. The carnal mind is strictly the earthly or sensual mind; that which the moral and the profligate alike possess, while loving the world and the things of the world. It is not an expression applying merely to the most abandoned, but one that applies to every human being, let his outward conduct be ever so fair, whose mind cleaves to this earth. The miser as well as the spendthrift; the pleasing young man who is following earthly objects with all his heart, and the engaging young woman whose thoughts are fixed on fashion, dress, and gaiety, as much possess the carnal mind, as does the shameless profligate, whose conduct they abhor: and the sober tradesman, whose plans and schemes all refer to this world, is as much under its influence as either of the others.

All these have a worldly or carnal mind, and what is it?—enmity against God, enmity itself: can worse be said of devils?

An important inquiry connected with this subject is, Are we to understand this sad description, as a description of mankind at large, or only of the worst part of the human race? Let the word of God give the reply. Hear its solemn answer: "Death has passed upon all men because all have sinned. The scripture hath concluded all under sin. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way." "The whole world lieth in wickedness;" lies like a wounded and fallen captive, the helpless prey of an infernal foe. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. They are all gone aside; they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one. They are all under sin, there is none righteous, no not one. If one died for all then were all dead."

If we refer this point to the decision of the best of men, they unite from their own sad experience to confirm it.—David humbly confesses, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Daniel, who became so peculiar a favourite of heaven, humbly deplores his rebellion against his Maker. Job, not less distinguished for his piety, said, "I abhor myself and

repent in dust and ashes." Isaiah exclaims, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." Paul, the pattern of piety and usefulness, said, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. We were by nature the children of wrath even as others."

O my young friend, after such a review of the Scriptural account of our natural condition, how just and weighty appears the observation, "The merely outward irregularities of men, bear no more proportion to the whole of their depravity, than the particles of water, which are occasionally emitted from the surface of the ocean, to the tide that rolls beneath."

Think not that I love to dwell on this melancholy subject. Far from it; but I warn you of your state that you may seek deliverance from it; and would so plainly show you of the danger of such a state, that you may flee from the wrath to come. That divine book, which gives the awful description, you have now read, of your state, gives as affecting an account of your danger. By the God of eternal truth you are assured, that men are "by nature the children of wrath; that he who believeth not is condemned already; and that judgment has come upon all men to condemnation;" that men as sinners are in "a state of death;

that the wages of sin is death ;" the second and more dreadful death, which consists in being "cast into the lake of fire." And that "the soul which sinneth shall surely die." That "destruction and misery are in the ways of men ; and that a day of judgment and perdition to ungodly men is approaching ; for which they are reserved." Even the compassionate God is declared "to hate the workers of iniquity ; and to have his face set against them that do evil. to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth ;" and it is his solemn assertion that "There is no peace to the wicked."

As it were, if possible, to guard men from self-deception, on a point of such infinite importance, the strongest expressions are used, in the word of God, in asserting that all are thus undone. "As many as have sinned without law, (without the advantages of God's written word,) shall also perish without law : and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law ;" and its judgment is, that "every one is cursed, who hath not kept all things, that are written in the book of the law to do them." In other words, that every one, who even by a single sin has broken the commands of God, has become an accursed creature. The apostles of our Lord declare "that the wrath of God is revealed from

heaven," not merely against some atrocious crimes, but, "against all unrighteousness;" that "every transgression and disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward; that God will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil; and that whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" as truly condemned and ruined by that single act, as he would be had he broken the whole. While these are the declarations of inspired apostles, their holy Lord affirms, that even a sinful word exposes the soul to the danger of hell fire.

Not merely is our natural state full of danger, but that danger is inexpressibly dreadful. "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "The wicked shall be turned into hell: even all the nations that forget God;" and on them "God will rain fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest:" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" for "our God is a consuming fire." The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished, with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the

Lord and the glory of his power. Whosoever has not his name found in the book of life, will be then cast into the lake of fire." Not merely will atrocious sinners meet this dreadful doom, but the fearful and unbelieving, "those who are too cowardly to follow Christ, or who disbelieve the truths of his gospel, "shall be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Then shall they eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices; while "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

The divine Saviour, who was a pattern of tenderness and compassion, though he wept over wretched men, yet declared that he himself would pronounce the dreadful sentence on all the irreligious, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" and he affirms that "they shall go away into everlasting punishment; into the furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." To avoid this he bids you count nothing too dear. "Fear not," says he, "them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, but fear Him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." Dreadful doom! "whose heart can endure or whose

hands be strong in the day that God shall deal with him? who can dwell with everlasting burnings? who can endure devouring fire?"

While you are thus warned of your danger, even by the Lord himself, you are as solemnly assured, by him, that multitudes plunge into this eternal ruin; and that no outward privileges will suffice to deliver you from its horrors. "Wide," says he, "is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" and then he adds in the most impressive manner—"Strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it! Many are called, but few are chosen." Presume not then, that there is little danger of missing the path to heaven, for there is much. The way is narrow. Presume not that most will be saved, and that therefore you may go contentedly with the multitude. The multitude are travelling the downward road; and but few find the path which leads to glory and to God; O cherish a pious concern to become one of that happy few!

Perhaps, my young friend, you attempt to set aside all that I have urged, respecting the danger of your state, by pleading, "I am not guilty of any notorious crimes; lying, lewdness, sabbath-breaking, dishonesty, and

a hundred other vices, in which thousands indulge, I never practised." If you knew yourself and the law of God better, you might perceive that you have, in your heart, committed many sins, of which you now think yourself guiltless; but if it be as you imagine, yet the word of God declares you a condemned creature, for leaving undone what you should have done, as much as for doing what you should not. Though your life may be moral, yet if you do not from your heart submit to the Son of God, you do not obey the gospel. "Be not," then, "deceived:" not merely the open profligate, but "the unrighteous," all who are destitute of real piety, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be accursed. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." The blessed Redeemer has taught us that merely making light of the gospel, is the way to eternal ruin. "How then shall we escape, if we neglect (do nothing worse than neglect) so great salvation!"

And now, what are your views of your own state? Do you feel yourself to be justly a child of wrath, or do you cling to the delusions, by which thousands are undone? When looking round, you see many amiable

persons, who seem to want nothing but the one thing needful, do you ask, "Are these like the vilest sinners threatened with eternal wrath? or if they are, can these be deserving of it?" Search the book of God, and you will there surely find that they are; and that, without one thing more, all the amiable qualifications imaginable will do no more to save them from eternal wrath, than a fine dress to save a man from destruction, if hurled from the top of a tremendous precipice. Perhaps you may have been an affectionate child, you may be tender and compassionate, dutiful and obliging, but will this save you? No never.—Excellent as these qualifications are in their place, if these could have atoned for sin, and saved the soul, the Son of God need not have died. But the fact is, you may possess all these, and a thousand other amiable recommendations, and yet live in rebellion against your God; and thus, however fair your character may be in the sight of men, in that of God it may be entire enmity against himself. What is rebellion against God but continued disobedience and neglect of his commands? And are you not guilty of this? Perhaps you think not. Well, inquire a little further. Which is the first and great commandment? Is it not "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with

all thy mind, and with all thy strength?" Have you kept this? Has God had all your heart? Have all your affections been fixed on him? Has he been loved with all your soul and mind; and thus stood highest in your esteem; and been chosen as your supreme good and only portion? If not, however fair and pleasing your outward conduct may have been, you have been all your life committing the greatest of sins; for you have lived breaking God's first and great commandment every day of your existence. If to love God above all things is the first and greatest commandment, to live forgetful of him must be one of the greatest of sins, and indeed a sin that opens the way to every other. O my young friend, could we see things aright, we should feel that the most aggravated guilt is the neglect of the blessed Saviour and our adorable God! The blackness of every other crime would be as light, compared with the more horrible blackness of alienation of the heart from God, that first of sins, that root of every other. This has been mine, this has been yours! and, unless your heart be changed by divine grace, even at this moment, this sin is yours. Though unstained with the other dark offences of the robber or the adulterer, yet this blackest of all you have as well as they. Like them you belong to a

false apostate race, that have forsaken their God, and gone away backward. And how can you hope for heaven if this darkest of crimes remains unrepented and unforsaken?

Have I succeeded in convincing you that neglect of God and want of love to him is so enormous a sin, that this only, if you had no other, would be sufficient to sink the soul to the lowest depths of hell? If I have not, O let me urge it further upon you, in a familiar illustration! Suppose that a child, as soon as he could discover any disposition, should show an entire disregard to his most affectionate parents. They, fondly attached to him, and desirous to secure a return of affection, study all they can for his advantage, and heap new favours on him. Still he forgets them and shows them no love. They confer on him more favours, more benefits still; yet he still forgets them and even discovers a growing aversion for them. At length they place him out in the world, and do what they can to promote his happiness there; he still forgets them, seems insensible to all their affection; has no more love for them than the stones beneath their feet; and even treats them with contempt; shuns their presence; and banishes the thought of them from his mind. Would not such a child deserve to lose his parents' love, and to be cast off for ever? Suppose this ungrateful child.

by abusing his parents' kindness, undone, utterly undone ; but their kindness ends not. They make themselves poor, to place him once more in circumstances of comfort, and give up whatever they have most valuable for this purpose. Yet still he goes on as before, unaffected by their tenderness ; unthankful for their favours ; and with an increasing dislike to them. Could they still retain one parental feeling ? Would not such a monster of ingratitude deserve to be forgotten for ever ? Or could they be thought unkind, if they refused to admit this child, with these worst of dispositions in his heart, to dwell in the closest intimacy with them ? Would the case be mended, if this ungrateful creature were affectionate and grateful to every one but his parents ; and careless of none but those his best friends and tenderest benefactors ? Would not this make his guilt the worse, as it would show that his heart was not without gratitude and affection, except towards those to whom these feelings were most justly due ? Would it be unreasonable for the most affectionate parents to banish such a child from their presence for ever ? My young friend, harsh as it may sound, if you neglect true piety you are a more ungrateful child to God than the most ungrateful child could possibly be to the most affectionate parents. For how little are the

obligations of a child to his parent, compared with those of a creature to his Creator and his God! And as much greater as is the obligation, so much viler, so much blacker is the ingratitude of neglect. O how great is the debt of gratitude you owe to God! It is on his world you live. All that is agreeable around you was made so by him. Here are you placed to prepare for an unspeakably better state. Nor are you here forgotten by your God. Every moment of time, every breath you draw, every pleasure you feel, you owe to him. No day passes without its blessings. One favour has scarcely vanished before others appear. The end of one mercy is the beginning of another. Though forgotten, God is not forgetful. Though he may have been neglected by you for days and years, he spares you still that you may turn to him. He has not cut short your days in the moment of sin; nor hurried you from the scene of guilty delight to the place of eternal torment. Though unthanked for his blessings day after day he has continued to give them.—Consider that every thing you enjoy is God's; and then think, can the worst of crimes against the best of earthly friends be half so heinous as ingratitude to God? The mercies I have mentioned are the smallest of his mercies. We are fallen creatures. You have destroyed

yourself, but in him is your help. To save you from ruin he gave his beloved and adorable Son. Could he give more? Though he was rich, the Lord Jesus Christ for your sake became poor, that you, through his poverty, might be rich! Could he do more? You are a child whom God has placed on earth and crowned with mercies; and because you were else undone for ever, he, to restore you from your fallen state, has to every other gift added that best and greatest, his beloved Son. Could a child, under God, indebted to its parents for life, indebted to them for all its comforts, and indebted to them for recovery from a thousand evils, owe them a thousandth part so much love and gratitude, as you owe to God? or could such a one be a thousandth part so guilty as you must be if you slight all the unspeakable goodness of God, and all the infinite love of the dying Saviour? How horrible a state it is, through wilful sin, to become the enemy of God in this world, and then to be such for ever! to begin by neglecting a kind Heavenly Father here, and to end by hating him, as the sinner will, beyond the grave! To hate him, who is all that is excellent and amiable, and in whose favour alone can any happiness be found hereafter. How horrible, most horrible a state is this! yet this condition

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is yours, if you are not reconciled to God. Can you expect that he should glorify in his presence, and admit to his right hand, those whose hearts are averse to his ways, or entirely negligent of them ; who are loaded with mercies, but still forgetful of the Giver? What though they shine in the view of their fellow rebels, what though they be adorned with a thousand charms of body or mind, yet God beholds the serpent that lurks beneath the rose ; He sees the ungrateful hellish heart.

And now, my young friend, with all the seriousness I can use, allow me to ask you, if you were this moment to be summoned before the throne of your Judge, and were accused of having lived negligent of God, and thus of having lived a life of dreadful sin, would you not be obliged to plead guilty to the charge? or at least to stand speechless and confused before you: Maker? Does not your conscience tell you that you must? and if it does, "God is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things."

III.—SOME OF THE SINS OF YOUTH ENUMERATED.

I ENTREAT you to follow me, while I point out to you some of those sins which ruin multitudes. Among these evils a thought-

less, inconsiderate spirit, is, in young persons, one of the most common, and one of the most fatal. While open impiety slays its thousands, this sinks its ten thousands to perdition. A time is coming when you must consider your ways. From the bed of death, or from the eternal world, you must take a review of life; but, as you love your soul, defer not till that solemn period, which shall fix your eternal state, the momentous question; "How has my life been spent?" Look back on your past years. They are gone for ever. But what report have they borne to heaven? Will they rise up in the judgment against you? Possibly you may not see many instances of flagrant crime; but do you see nothing which would fill you with alarm, if going to the bar of your Maker? Perhaps you reply, "It is true, I cannot justify all the actions of my youthful years; yet the worst were but the frolics of youth." My friend, let me deal plainly with you. Do they bear that name in heaven? Does your Judge view them in no worse a light? know, that what you pass over so lightly, your God abhors as sins;—sins, the least of which, if unforgiven, would sink your soul to utter, endless woe. For "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against ALL ungodliness and unrighteousness." The iniquities of youth, as well as

of riper years, are abhorred by him. The sins of youth were the bitter things which holy Job lamented; and for deliverance from which David devoutly prayed. "Thou writest bitter things against me; and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." "Remember not the sins of my youth."

Take then another review of life. Begin with childhood. In that early period, so often falsely represented as a scene of innocence, the corruptions of a fallen nature begin to appear; and the early years of life are stained with falsehood, disobedience, cruelty, vanity, and pride. Can you recollect no instances, in which your earlier years were thus polluted with actual sin? Can you bring to remembrance no occasion, on which falsehood came from your lips; or vanity, pride, or obstinacy, was cherished in your heart; or when cruelty to the meaner creatures was your sport? Shrink not from the review; though painful, it is useful. It is far better to see and abhor your youthful sins in this world, where mercy may be found, than to have them brought to your remembrance, when mercy is no more.

But you have passed the years of childhood; you have advanced one stage forward in your journey to an endless world. Has sin weakened as your years increased?

Have not some sinful dispositions ripened into greater vigour? Have not others, which you knew not in your earlier years, begun to appear? and does not increasing knowledge add new guilt to all your sins?

Among the prevailing iniquities of youth allow me to enumerate:—

Pride. This is a sin common to all ages; but it often peculiarly infects the young. It is abhorred by God. "He resisteth the proud; but giveth grace to the humble. EVERY ONE that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. The proud are cursed." Pride is the source of numberless mischiefs; and the parent of many other vices. Has not this sin which God so much abhors, appeared in your heart? Perhaps it has made you haughty, when you should have been humble; obstinate, when you should have been yielding; revengeful, when you should have been forgiving. You thought it showed spirit to resent an injury or insult, instead of patiently bearing it, like him whom you call your Lord. Perhaps it has filled you with dissatisfaction; when you should have been all submission. You have thought it hard, in the day of affliction, that you should be so tried; and even if you stayed the murmur against God from passing your lips, have you not felt it in your heart? Vain of the ornaments of apparel;

have you not bestowed more thought on the dress you should wear, than on the salvation of your immortal soul? and been more concerned about the shape of a coat, or the fashion of a gown or a bonnet, than about life or death eternal? Perhaps you have been one of those, who spend more time in surveying their own image in a glass, than in seeking the favour of their God. Ah, foolish vanity, when you must so soon say to corruption, "Thou art my father; and to the worm, thou art my mother and sister!" Yet foolish as it is, was it never yours? "Where is there a face so disagreeable, that never was the object of self-worship in a glass? And where a body, however deformed, that never was set up as a favourite idol, by the fallen spirit that inhabits it?"

A most prevalent, and most baneful kind of pride is, that which I may term the pride of self-righteousness. Our Lord, in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, gives a most striking description of this sin. The Pharisee boasts that he was not like others; that he had not committed such flagrant crimes as they; and that he practised duties which they omitted. On this sandy foundation, his hope for eternity rested. Nothing like humility entered his heart; but in all the pride of fancied virtue, he approached his God. This : the exact

spirit of multitudes in the present day ; and where young persons have been restrained from open immoralities, how commonly does it exist among them. It is pleaded respecting them, "that they are not like many profligate youths around them ; they have not given way to profaneness and lying ; to drunkenness or dishonesty ; but they have been kind and dutiful, tender and obliging ; have good hearts, and are good young people." They may have lived all their lives careless of God and their souls, but this is not taken into account ; others commend them, and they are willing to believe these commendations. They think themselves very good young persons ; and proud of this goodness, go forward to meet that God, who sees in them ten thousand crimes ; and who abhors nothing more, than the pride of self-righteousness in a creature polluted by daily iniquities.

Another common sin of the young is disobedience to parents. "Honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." This is the divine commandment. There is, it is true, one case in which even parents should not be obeyed ; when their directions and wishes are opposed to those of God ; for "we ought to obey God rather than men ;" and to love the Redeemer more than parents

themselves. Parents are commonly the tenderest of friends; and pious parents among the surest guides, that the young and inexperienced can have, to lead them to the footstool of God. Your interests are theirs. Your welfare their happiness. But ah! has their kindness met with the return it demanded? Have they received this obedience and affection from you?

Perhaps I address one, whose disobedience and unkindness have wrung with grief the hearts of fond and pious parents. Their desire has been, to see you walking in the ways of God. For this, they have led you to his house. For this, their prayers have ascended. This, by their early instructions and later admonitions, they have warned you to regard, as that concern, which, beyond all others, should interest your attention and engage all your heart. And now they see you negligent of God and religion; and mourn in secret that the child they love, is still a child of Satan. Ah! young man, or young woman, if this be your case, God, will bring you into judgment, for all your abuse of precious privileges, and all your neglect of parental instructions. And the prayers, and the tears, and the admonitions of your parents, will awfully witness against you. Think not that if affectionate and kind to them, you will much mitigate the

sorrows of truly pious parents. No they will still mourn at the thought, that the affectionate child they fondly love, is not a child of God. Bitterly will they mourn to think, that with so much that is lovely in their view, there is, in you, nothing that is lovely in the sight of God; and that all which they esteem so pleasing in you, must soon be buried in the deeps of hell.

Another sin not peculiar to the young, but awfully prevalent among them, is the waste of precious time. The word of God reminds us that "time is short," and commands us to "redeem the time." Time is given us to prepare for eternity; but, alas! how are its golden hours sinned and trifled away! Many young persons act as if they thought they had so much time before them, that they could afford to squander some, when perhaps their wasted youth is their all;—all, in which they can "escape from hell and fly to heaven." One of the most common ways in which time is worse than wasted, is devoting its hours to romances, plays, and novels. Novels are the poison of the age. If you are a novel-reader, think the next time you take a novel into your hands: "How shall I answer to my tremendous Judge for the time occupied by this?" When he shall say to me, "I gave you so many years in yonder world, to fit you for eternity: did you

converse with your God in devotion? did you study his word? did you attend to the duties of life; and strive to improve to some good end even your leisure hours?" then shall I be willing to reply, "Lord, my time was otherwise employed. Novels and romances occupied the leisure of my days; when, alas! my bible, my God, and my soul were neglected!" Does not conscience remind you of many wasted hours? hours which, though thoughtlessly thrown away, would soon appear to you more valuable than mountains of gold or of pearl.

Wilful neglect of the soul and eternity is another common sin of youth. Young persons presume on future life; and grieve the Holy Spirit, by delaying to regard the one thing needful. They trust in their youth. God reproves the folly, and says, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth;" but few will listen to the warning. Instead of doing so, they flatter themselves that they shall live for many years; and think sickness, death, and judgment far from them. Hence they neglect the soul, and seem to imagine religion unsuitable, or at least not needful for themselves. The blessed God calls on them in his word; the crucified Saviour bids them come to himself; "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me."

The ministers of the gospel urge the advice upon them ; prayers are offered, tears shed for them ; yet many persist in their own ways ; and, whatever they do, will not remember their Creator in the days of their youth. My young friend, has this been your sin and folly ? Oh, if it has, remember how many ways there are out of the world ! how many diseases to cut short your days ! God gives you time enough to secure salvation ; but think not that he gives you any to spare.

An attachment to sensual pleasure and worldly gaieties is another most prevalent sin of youth. The word of God describes those who live in pleasure, "as dead while they live ;" and classes with the most abominably wicked, those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Though such are the declarations of the Lord, yet pleasure, pleasure, is the chief object of thousands of the young. Some pursue it, in the gross and brutish paths of rioting and drunkenness, of chambering and wantonness ; others in less profligate ways, but with hearts not less intent upon it. The card-table, the dance, the horse-race, the play-house, the fair, the wake, are the scenes of their highest felicity. My young friend, has not this love of worldly pleasure dwelt in your heart ? Perhaps you have not run into scandalous and disgraceful excesses, but have you not had a greater love

to worldly pleasures than to God and religion? If you have, you but too surely bear that awful mark, of being a child of destruction, that you are a lover of pleasures more than a lover of God. Have you not been present at scenes of sinful amusement and guilty festivity? Have not you been as anxious as others for those sensual delights, which were most suited to your taste? and, while thus loving this world, have not you forgotten that which is to come? and been more earnest about a day of promised pleasure, than about securing an eternity of pure, celestial joy? Think not that I mean to insinuate, that the Christian should be the slave of melancholy. Far from it; none have so much reason to be cheerful as he,

"Who reads his title clear,
"To mansions in the skies."

But wide is the difference between the innocent cheerfulness and humble joy of the Christian, and the vain pleasures of a foolish world. Let conscience now answer, as in the sight of God: has the love of worldly and sensual pleasure been cherished in your heart! If your situation has prevented your freely following the delights of sense, has the love of them dwelt within? If it has, though you should not have had the opportunity of indulging your worldly taste once in a

month, or a year, you are still in God's sight as much a lover of pleasures as if they had occupied every moment of your time.

Sabbath-breaking, though not confined to the young, is a sin that eternally ruins thousands of them. God calls the sabbath-day his own, but makes the profit of it ours; and sabbaths spent in holiness, devotion, faith, and love, are blessings which help the soul on towards heaven; while broken sabbaths increase the sinner's load of guilt here, and of misery hereafter. At the beginning of time, God set apart the sabbath for sacred uses; and his express commandment is, "Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy." He calls for the day. He does not say, keep holy the sabbath morning, or the sabbath afternoon, or the sabbath evening, but the sabbath day. Though this sacred commandment is thus positive and express, yet no sin is more common than sabbath-breaking. Some profane the whole day; others a part of it. Some employ many of the precious hours of the sabbath in attending to their worldly employments. Others make it a season for finery and gaiety. They go even to the house of God merely to see, or be seen. They idle away their sacred time in trifling conversation, vain amusements, and silly mirth; or waste the holy day by rambling in the fields, with companions as

frivolous and worldly as themselves. How have your sabbaths been spent? Have you been one of the thoughtless young women, or loose young men, that on the sabbath-day in giddy, but truly pitiable parties, throng our streets, or wander in our fields? Have you been one, who has made that most blessed day no blessing to yourself?

I have now named a few youthful sins, but think not that these things are all. No; every sin to which our fallen nature is prone, has been found not merely in those who, by years, were ripened in guilt, but in those also who were beginning the journey of life. Not to enumerate the darker crimes of the multitude, who drink in iniquity like water, where, my young friend, is the youthful heart that never felt the rising emotions of those vile passions, pride, envy, malice, or revenge? Where is the youthful tongue, that never uttered a profane, or wanton, or, at least, an unkind or slanderous word? Where is the youth, possessed of the forms of piety, that never mocked God, "with solemn sounds, upon a thoughtless tongue?" Where is the youthful ear, that was never open to drink in, with pleasure, the conversation of the trifling and the foolish? and where the youthful eye, that never cast a haughty, an angry, a wanton, or insulting glance? Are you the person? Can you appeal, to the

Searcher of Hearts, and rest your eternal hopes on the success of the appeal, that love, unmingled love to God and man, has always dwelt in your bosom? that no resentful, envious, or unkind emotion was ever, for a moment harboured there? that the law of kindness has always dwelt upon your lips? that only meekness, and tenderness, and goodness, have glanced from your eye; and that your ear was never opened to hear, with pleasure, of a brother's shame? Can you make the appeal? Surely you cannot. Your own "heart condemns you; and God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things."

IV. — RELIGION BRIEFLY DESCRIBED.

RELIGION is the chief concern of all; and early religion is what God solemnly requires. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." It is as much as if it were said, "Mind religion while you are young. Let that possess the first place in your heart; for it is worthy of it. In the days of your youth, those best days, prepare to meet your God. While young, make him your friend: seek an on

during mansion in the skies; and thus to every other source of cheerfulness, add those last and best, your heavenly Father's care, and your gracious Saviour's love." The blessed Redeemer affectionately declares the importance and value of real piety. "One thing is needful, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."

Most persons will acknowledge the excellence and importance of religion, yet few are its real friends. "Few there be that find it." Many are entirely careless of it. Others have the form without the power. Others play the hypocrite's part. They "speak fair words and act foul deeds, lift their eyes to heaven, and turn their steps to hell."

Now, while I endeavour to describe to you what religion is, let me beseech you to unite your prayers with mine, that you may indeed be taught of God; and let me beseech you to attend as seriously as you would do if you were lying on a dying bed, and were there earnestly inquiring how salvation might be found.

Religion, my young friend, consists in such a practical knowledge of our own guilt and misery, as leads us to abhor sin and ourselves; and in such an acquaintance with the blessed God, and the adorable Saviour, as leads us to believe on Jesus for

salvation; and resting all our hopes upon his atonement and righteousness, to trust our eternal all to his care; and to yield up ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the Father, as our Father; to the Son, as our Saviour; and to the Holy Spirit, as our Sanctifier.

The foundation of religion is laid in that knowledge of our own guilt and depravity, to which, in the last two chapters, I directed your attention. As sickness teaches the patient to prize the physician's aid; as slavery leads the captive to seek for liberty; and condemnation makes the criminal cry for mercy; so the knowledge of our own condemnation and guilt, prepares the soul for the reception of Jesus Christ. Are you acquainted with this? Are you sensible that you have rebelled against a God of love? and are you penitent for your transgressions?

If knowledge of yourself, and of the evil of sin, has humbled you in the dust, and led you, from the heart, to exclaim, "God, be merciful to me a sinner;" then, permit me to add, that a most essential part of religion, is an acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ. Not a mere speculative knowledge of his excellences, like that which even an infernal spirit may possess; but such a practical

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knowledge of his power and grace, and such a belief in him as subdues the soul, and leads the penitent sinner to make Jesus his hope, his trust, his all. The substance of the gospel message respecting Jesus Christ, is—that his nature is divine ; “ he was in the beginning with God ; ” that his own infinite compassion, and his Father’s love, led him to assume the nature of man ; “ He took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. Though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.” That his great object was to atone for sin. “ He was wounded for our transgressions ; He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.” That this wonderful plan, for the redemption of a ruined world, was the effect of the love and wisdom of God. “ God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded towards us, in all wisdom.” And that Jesus Christ is now exalted at the right hand of power to intercede for his flock ; to guide, guard, and protect them ; to receive them at the hour of death ; and hereafter to appear as the judge of all ; when he will

pass on all mankind, the sentence that shall fix their eternal state ; and when he will perfect the happiness of all his humble friends.

In the case of man and in your own case, sin has deserved eternal punishment. Its wages (that recompense which it has deserved) is death. The justice of God called for the execution of the sentence ; but his wisdom devised a plan of mercy for a rebellious world ; and his compassion induced him to adopt the plan. It was, that his Beloved Son should suffer for guilty man and bear the curse instead of him. Thus would sin be punished ; and thus might the sinner be entirely forgiven.

An acquaintance with this divine Saviour is absolutely needful for you. He is set forth as the only foundation for a sinner's eternal hopes. His is the only name by which a sinner can be saved ; and he is the only way of access to God. The way of salvation is believing on him from the heart, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." But, my young friend, permit me affectionately to caution you against deceiving your own soul with the shadow of belief instead of the substance ; for in one sense, "the devils believe and tremble." Believing in Jesus, is termed, in scripture, "believing with the heart." There

is the consent of the heart to this plan of salvation, as well as the persuasion of the mind. Believing on Christ, is described as a receiving of him. If you believe, you will receive him as your Lord, your hope, your Saviour, your all. Believing is also described as being a persuasion of divine truths, and an embracing of them. If you believe on Jesus, you will be persuaded, on God's authority, that he is what the scriptures represent, an all-sufficient Saviour; that he has done what the scriptures declare, that he has laid down his life for you; and, persuaded of these truths, you will embrace this great salvation. Believing is represented as a going to Christ; it is such a conviction of his power and grace as is attended by the going, as it were, of the soul to him for life and salvation. Look then to him. Rest your eternal all on his righteousness and death. Let this become your plea for obtaining mercy and heaven, that Jesus loved you; that Jesus died for you. Go in the solemn moments of retired devotion, and intrust your all to Jesus. Can you not there say to him, to whom darkness and day are alike, "Lord, I adore thee as my Saviour, thou didst die for my sins, and I commit my eternal all to thee? Wash me in thy blood; wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Thy gospel I embrace. All that thou dis-

coverest let me believe ; all that thou teachest let me learn. Thy example I would follow. All that thou lovest, let me love ; all that thou hatest, let me hate ; and all that thou commandest, let my faith, working by love, urge me to obey. Be thou my all ; thy death and righteousness my hope ; thy life my pattern ; thy word my rule ; thy glory my aim ; thy love my heaven."

A well-placed trust in Jesus Christ will be found a sure support for hope, and peace, and joy, when all other dependences sink in eternal ruin ; and all other hopes are blasted in black despair. The soul committed to his care will be safe through its short stay among the objects of time and sense ; and what is far more important, will be safe and happy when the graves are giving up their dead, when the world is fleeing from the majesty of its Maker's face, and when this creation is perishing in final flames.

Numbers profess a regard to Christ, whose hopes are, in reality, built upon themselves ; and they imagine that when they have done as well as they can, Jesus will make up the rest. But that right knowledge of the Saviour, in which so much of religion consists, leads to very different views : if you enjoy this, Jesus Christ will be your all. You will, as a lost, helpless, condemned, and wretched creature, come to him for life. Your whole trust will

be in him : abhorring yourself, you will flee to him as your sole dependence. You will indulge no hope, from imagining that your sins are few or small ; but will own them deserving of divine wrath. You will no longer rest on the deluding, but absolutely false notion, that you have done as well as you could, and that, therefore, God will accept you ; but you will be humbled as a guilty creature at your Maker's feet. Nothing past, nothing present, nothing future of your own, must, in the slightest degree, be the ground of your dependence ; but, as stripped of every thing, as in yourself destitute of all good, you must look to the Lamb of God. A dying minister, eminent in his day, said to a visitor who was taking leave of him, " I am every day expecting my death ; but I desire to die like the penitent thief, crying to the crucified Jesus for mercy. I am nothing ; I have nothing ; I can do nothing, except what is unworthy ; my eye, and hope, and faith, is to Christ on his cross. I bring an unworthiness, like that of the poor dying thief, unto him ; and have no more to plead than he. Like the poor thief, I am waiting to be received, by the infinite grace of my Lord, into his kingdom."

But, my young friend, do not mistake the nature of the gospel ; or imagine that because the soul is saved solely through the obedi-

ence and death of Christ, upon its believing in him, that therefore holiness of heart and life is an unimportant thing. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." When Jesus invites the humbled soul to him, he adds, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me;" he says, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. If a man love me he will keep my words." The true Christian's faith is represented as, "faith which works by love;" and without the fruits of holiness, "faith is dead, being alone." If you, from your heart, receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as your Redeemer, you will also submit to him as your sovereign Lord. You will love the commandments of God, as just and holy. You will yield up yourself, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord Jesus Christ; that "whether you live you may live to the Lord, or whether you die you may die to the Lord." While religion leads you to trust the Saviour's death, it will teach you to copy his life.

There are few situations, in which Christians can show those bright specimens of glowing piety, which dazzle the eyes of others; but that steady, humble, constant piety; those secret desires for holiness and heaven; that private, daily converse, with God in prayer; that cheerful, firm dependence on the atoning Saviour; and those

attempts, in the retired scenes of domestic life, to live as apostles would have lived, if placed in a like situation ;—all these flow from following Jesus, as surely as water flows from a fountain : all these are the effects of being not our own ; but of having Christ live in us ; and being given up to the Lord. If we were wandering in an unknown country, and having lost our way, had intrusted ourselves to a guide, should we not renounce our own judgment and our own will, and be so at our leader's disposal, that we might almost be said to move with his feet, and to see with his eyes ? Such is the case in religion. We have lost our way to a better world, and, if Christians indeed, shall commit ourselves to Jesus' care, to be saved by him, and in his way, by grace alone ; yet to go where he bids ; to do what he enjoins ; to live as he directs ; to love what he loves ; to hate what he hates ; to shun what he commands us to avoid ; to sit at his feet and learn of him ; and to " follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Closely connected with the knowledge of the Son is the knowledge of the Father ; indeed so closely, that they cannot be separated. " This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Jesus was " God manifest in the flesh." In him the Father's excellences

shone in such a lively manner, that "he who hath seen him, hath seen the Father." Yet it is proper to remind you, that Jesus is your way to God. The design of Christ is to bring you to the Father, and reconcile you to him. He is the mediator, or intercessor, by whom you may find acceptance, with your most compassionate, but much injured God. If you obey the gospel, God will become your father. To him you will yield up what you have and are, as a reasonable sacrifice. In him you will seek your happiness; and in his presence your eternal rest. To know him, to love him, and to enjoy his favour, will be the highest ambition of your soul. Your wish will be that his will may be done *in* you; that his will may be done *by* you; and that his will may be done *with* you.

A very important part of religion, is a knowledge of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is promised to them that ask for his aid. The Christian is "born of the Spirit." The Spirit is sent to "convince the world of sin." By the power of the Holy Spirit "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart." By him hope abounds in the believer. His mind is enlightened; he is sanctified; and strengthened, by the Spirit of God. By the Spirit, he is taught to cry, "Abba Father; and love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gen-

tleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," are the fruits of the Spirit.

All the graces of the Christian character, all the parts of holiness, are thus produced by the Spirit of God ; and while you are assured that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," you are taught to look to God for his Spirit to "form your heart anew." While it is to be your aim to glorify God, in all things, your dependence for ability to do so, is to be on the promised Spirit. Yet think not, that, on this account, sloth and negligence, in religious matters, will be excused. The abuse, which Satan and the world would have you make of this evangelical doctrine is, that if the work is thus God's, you need not trouble yourself respecting it. A surer guide, the Lord himself, makes a widely different inference. That, "he works in you, both to will, and to do," is made, by him, the reason why you "should work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Thus you see what religion is ; it consists not in a round of outward forms, though if it be enjoyed outward privileges will be prized and improved. It consists not, in the strictest mere morality, though if it influence the heart, holiness must surely follow ; but in such a knowledge of God in Christ as makes believers his, and not their own.

If religion be chosen by you, you will de-

termine, in God's strength, to abide by your choice to your latest day. While the almost Christian halts between the world and Jesus, those who really flee to him resolve to be his decidedly. "The world will laugh at me, may the young Christian say :—" Well, let it laugh ; if I may but enjoy the smile of God, I can bear the senseless laugh of men '" The world will frown on me :—" Well, let it frown. It frowned on my Master before me, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord." If you flee to Jesus, you will flee to him to be his, not only decidedly, but for ever. You will view religion as a blessing chosen once, but chosen for life. Though not called to martyrdom, yet that high degree of value for Christ, which animated martyrs, must dwell in your heart, or your religion will be an empty name ; for the Lord has declared, " He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

Early piety consists in your thus becoming a disciple of Christ's in your youthful days. If this be your wisdom and happiness, you will give your youth to God. You

will listen to him, saying, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" and the language of your heart will be, "Blessed God, by thy help, I will. I consecrate the morning of my life to thee, I owe thee more than I can repay even in eternity. Take, then, O take the little yet the best, that I can offer; the prime, the flower of my days. Most young persons around me are ruled by the maxims of a corrupt world. Sinful nature governs them; evil companions lead them astray; and Satan urges them to perdition; but, Lord, I will listen to thy voice. Be thou my guide through all the slippery paths of youth. I cry to thee as my Father; I seek thee now as such, and let me love and obey thee as a friend, to whom my welfare is dearer than it is to myself."

If piety, my young friend, be yours, you will, in youth forsake the world and dare to stand up for God and religion. While thousands of the young are building all their hopes upon this fleeting scene, yours will be fixed on things unseen and eternal. While they are trifling with the Saviour's love, you will gladly listen to his voice; and learn of him. To him you will flee, and to him will say, "Dear Lord, my youth is thine. I gladly yield to thee the best of my hasty life; gladly for thy sake renounce a deceiving

world. For, O! what didst thou not yield up for me! It is but a few false vanities that I relinquish, when resigning the world for thee; and while I part with a little dross, in thee I find inestimable treasures. Blessed Jesus, thou didst part with real happiness on my account. Brighter glories, than thy angels wear, thou didst resign for me. Thou didst forego on my account nobler joys, than those to which I aspire in thy presence. Take then my youth. Too much of it has already been lost; but, Lord, accept what remains; and let not another of my days be spent in the service of a world, that murdered thee; or of thy great enemy and mine. 'Love so amazing, so divine,' as is thy love, 'demands my youth, my soul, my life, my all.'"

Thus, my young friend, if true piety is yours, must you renounce all that religion opposes; thus change your object, your master, and your way; and thus devote yourself altogether to Him, who died on your account. Without this, to hope for heaven, is as unreasonable, as it would be, if you threw yourself from the top of a precipice, to hope that you should not fall. It is hoping against hope. The word of God is plain, that without conversion there is no salvation.

V.—CAUTIONS AGAINST SOME DELUSIVE SUPPORTS ON WHICH MANY REST THEIR HOPE TO THEIR ETERNAL RUIN.

It is clearly evident, from the word of God, that many fatally deceive themselves with respect to their spiritual state. They say to themselves "Peace, peace," while God declares there is no peace to persons in their condition. Such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, that you cannot too solicitously guard against its delusions, and those of the world.

I am now to warn you of some of these delusions.

One of the most common is, the belief that all those are Christians, who bear the Christian name, whose lives are virtuous, and whose deportment and temper are lovely. But alas! all this is found in thousands, who know nothing of real religion. Perhaps this can scarcely be made more evident, than by referring you to the history of one, who possessed these qualifications, in no common degree, but who still wanted the one thing needful.

In Matt. xix. Mark x. or Luke xi. an instance of this kind is recorded. "When the Lord had gone forth into the way, there came one, (a young Ruler) running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good master, what

shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He was so moral a person, that he could say with respect to many of the commandments of God, (at least as far as his outward conduct was concerned,) "All these have I observed from my youth." "And Jesus beholding him, loved him; and said, One thing thou lackest; Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up thy cross and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved. He was very sorrowful, for he was very rich." There cannot be a reasonable doubt that this young man was in a state of sin and death, notwithstanding all that seemed so promising and fair; and, perhaps, this little history is recorded to show how far a person may go in morality and a concern for religion, and yet fall short of heaven. There are but few, in the bloom of life, so amiable, and, according to worldly views, so good as this young man; and yet with much that was lovely and commendable, he still was a stranger to real piety. His life had been moral; he had been a dutiful son; was most probably affectionate and kind; and doubtless had secured the esteem of his friends, when even the Lord saw so much that was pleasing in him, that beholding him, he loved him. But when the blessed

Saviour put him to the test, whether he would part with all for Christ and heaven, then his heart failed him, and he showed that he still was in reality a lover of this world; and if any man, young or aged, wicked or virtuous, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Yet even the manner of his departure proved the interest he took in the question he had proposed; he went away grieved; and was very sorrowful. In short, he was such a one, that we may readily wish all young persons were like him; and yet he was such a one, that we must wish them to be much more than he was.

Guard against their dreadful delusion, who put a knowledge of some sacred truths, in the place of religion itself. Many such self-deceivers abound in the world. They can discourse on the hallowed themes of the gospel, but are strangers to its influence and power. To hear them talk, you might think them Christians; to see them act, you might suppose them heathens.

Watch against resting your eternal hopes on outward privileges. You live in what is termed a Christian land, but this does not make you a Christian; for a true Christian is a child of God "by faith in Christ Jesus." The young Ruler was favoured with outward privileges. The inhabitants of Capernaum

had enjoyed them, but sunk the deeper in hell through abusing them. And many, who ate and drank in the presence of Christ himself, and in whose streets he taught, will hear him say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." Perhaps you have enjoyed all the privileges of a pious education, yet think not that these will take you to heaven. You must be born again. Your parents' prayers will not fix you in glory, if you do not learn to pray. Your parents' faith will not be accounted yours. Many parents will be found at the right hand of Christ, whose children will never join them there; and many children, who found the way to glory, though their parents lost it.

Trust not, my young friend, your eternal hopes on the strictest attention to the outward forms and duties of religion. Though you should say, All these have I observed from my youth, yet this observance is not a foundation on which to rest for eternity. O eternity, eternity! who can be anxious enough to build their hopes aright, when building for eternity! Perhaps, from your infant days, the house of God may have been your resort. Perhaps, in your chamber, or your closet, your morning and evening devotions have been regularly paid. Perhaps you are disposed to ask, W^hat

more can I want? Alas! you may have done all this, and yet want every thing that most concerns you. You may want a new heart, and an interest in Jesus Christ. The Christian cannot live without prayer; but some attention to its outward forms does not make a Christian. God, it is true, may have had your words; but who has had your thoughts? Who has had your heart? Has he had these too? Have not these often been employed on other subjects, when, on your knees, you professed to be engaged with God? While some have passed months and years without prayer, you may have constantly attended to religious duties, but how little earnestness, how little sincerity, how little life, has there been in them. Consider how often, in private, you have knelt down and rose again, without a serious thought of God; how often, in public, you have listened with careless indifference; and then think whether you too may not be said to have spent days and months without prayer; and whether you have not really resembled those who live without God in the world.

Trust not your eternal all to the greatest freedom from open vice, and to, what the world may term, an innocent life. Perhaps, my young reader, the open vices, which ruin many, have not debased your character. Perhaps the impious profanations of the

swearer never escaped your lips. Perhaps the excesses of the drunkard or the libertine have not polluted you. Perhaps your tongue has usually uttered truth, and the arts of the liar have been unknown by you. You may have been free from these and other open vices, yet this cannot give you any well-founded hope of acquittal at the great day of judgment; for you have sins, and it is impossible for all the tongues on earth to express the evil of the smallest sin. Christ represents those whose sins are least and fewest as owing to God ten thousand talents; none owe less, though some may owe more. Thus the most virtuous and the most abandoned, in the sight of God, approach much nearer to each other in guilt, than you probably imagine. Trust not then to any fancied freedom from sin. It can hardly be urged on you too earnestly, that a single unpardoned sin is sufficient to condemn a soul to all eternity. Did not one sin sink angels from heaven? Did not one, that would now be termed a little sin, turn Adam out of paradise?

Rest not your everlasting all upon the goodness or morality of your life. Morality is a lovely thing, it will adorn, but it cannot make, a Christian. A person may be moral, yet a stranger to religion; but cannot be religious, and not be moral. Various causes

may produce morality of conduct, while the heart is altogether estranged from God. The young ruler, already mentioned, could say, respecting an outward attention to many of the commandments of God, All these have I observed from my youth ; yet he was perishing in sin. In his case, you see how moral may be the life, how lovely the deportment, how earnest after religion, the desires of one, who, after all, may fall short of religion, and thus fall short of glory. Has your morality been stricter than his? has your deportment been more amiable? or your desires after eternal life more earnest? If not, how can you hope for heaven on this ground, when he had all these, and yet was in the way to hell?

If you should not rest your eternal hopes on any of these things, much less should you on any other amiable qualifications.

Many young persons are possessed of a variety of these, who are destitute of all true piety. Though they trifle with God and eternity, yet affection to relatives and friends dwells in their hearts. Cheerfulness and good-humour beam from their countenances; and the accomplishments of science adorn their minds. All they seem to want is the one thing needful ; but in wanting that, as to the eternal world, they want every thing. Only the recommendations of that humble

piety, which makes Jesus all in all, would avail them there. The charms of religion only, will bloom beyond the grave; those of person, of disposition, of deportment, will not long keep their power to please. Where true piety is absent, these are momentary attractions, that must shortly fade, and leave no trace behind. Very quickly the most sensible tongue will be as silent as the most silly. Loveliness and deformity will be alike in the grave; and persons of the most amiable manners, and most engaging deportment, will there be on an equality with the savage and the brute. The charms of beauty, of manners, of wit, may adorn the young in their hasty journey to an endless world; but religion, only will prepare them for a heavenly home: those may glitter on the casket; but only that will beautify the jewel.

If then, my young friend, you would know your real state, examine not, from what pollutions you may have been kept free; not, what moral duties you have practised; not, what religious ordinances you may have regarded; or with what attractions you may be adorned; but inquire, are you acquainted with the sinfulness of your own heart? Have you ever experienced repentance towards God? Have you ever committed your helpless soul to the Lord Jesus Christ? and sought your happiness and eternal good in

him? If you are a stranger to all this, you are a stranger to religion.

**VI.—THE WORTH OF THE SOUL A REASON FOR
EARLY PIETY, AND ITS IMPORTANCE SHOWN
BY THE WORD OF GOD.**

THE chief design of the preceding sections has been to make you sensible of your need of spiritual blessings; and to give you a brief view of the nature of religion. Consider now more fully some of those reasons, which should induce you to embrace religion without delay. And may God enable me to set them before you, with that affectionate earnestness and plainness, which become one dying creature, when addressing another, who must soon be an inhabitant of heaven or hell.

One most weighty motive to induce you to give your youth to God, is that you possess an immortal soul. The body is the inferior part of your nature. Pass away a few short years, and it must mingle with the clods of the valley. By the body you are allied to worms and dust; by the soul, to angels and to God.

Your soul is immortal. A few years will finish all your delights, and hopes, and fears below; then will your soul be fixed

where it must live for ever. While you, my young friend, read these lines, the souls of millions are encountering all the sorrows, or are gladdened with all the joys, of an endless world. For ages have the bodies of many of them been turned to dust; their very tombstones are mouldered away; but they all live in eternity, though forgotten here; they are hidden from your sight, but are more alive to joy or sorrow, than they ever were upon earth. Soon will the time arrive, when you must meet this solemn change of being; when you must converse with man no more; but must become a companion of angels or of devils, And, O what is the worth of a soul! that may, through endless ages, shine in heaven, glorious as an angel of light; or which, covered with darkness, misery, and despair, must become like a devil, in that lake of fire, where the fire never shall be quenched. O! in pity to your own precious and immortal soul, embrace, without delay, the gospel of your God.

The worth of the soul is a subject on which the best and wisest men, have had their testimony confirmed, by the most careless and the worst. Martyrs have shown their sense of its value, by all their sufferings to secure its salvation. For this, thousands, as sensible as you of the comforts

life, have willingly forsaken 'kindred, country, friends, and ease;' have been tortured on racks, or devoured by beasts of prey; been burned alive, or suffered torments far more intolerable than burning! "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, were sawn asunder; were tempted; were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens, and caves of the earth." Impressed with the worth of the soul, many, with these dark scenes before them, have bid farewell to all the allurements of the world; to meet the roughest storms of persecution; face its dangers; and sink into the grave beneath them. Yet while some were burning, others were coming forward to take their places, in the true spirit of the English martyr, who at the place of execution, kissed the stake, and exclaimed, "Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life!" Does one of all these martyred myriads repent? Does one now imagine, that he suffered more than salvation was worth? Ah, no, if they could now address you, they might tell you, that sooner than lose the soul, they would burn in flames a

thousand times hotter; suffer torments a thousand times more protracted; prisons a thousand times more dismal; and meet death in forms, if possible, a thousand times more terrible. And was it worth their while to endure so much to reach heaven, and is it not worth yours, in earnestness, to seek admittance there?

If, after the testimony of such distinguished witnesses, you should hearken to those, who have trodden a less brilliant and less suffering path to heaven, their testimony would be the same. Say to the dying Christian, "You are in those circumstances which enable you to view this world, and the next, aright; what should I chiefly mind!" He, in purport, would reply, "Take care of your soul." A dying saint said, to some friends that visited him, "You come hither to learn to die. I can assure you, that your whole life, be it ever so long, is little enough to prepare for death. Have a care of this vain deceitful world, and the lusts of the flesh. Be sure you choose God for your portion; heaven for your home; God's glory for your end, his word for your rule; and then you need never fear but we shall meet with comfort." Or ask the dying profligate, he who treated all religion as a dream, and the soul as a trifle, say to him, What shall I chiefly mind, and would he

not reply, "Take care of your soul, and avoid my folly ; for I have ruined mine." One unhappy man, who had lived in wealth and splendour, but had trifled with eternal things, a short time before death, said, "I had provided in the course of my life, for every thing except death, and now, alas ! I am to die, although entirely unprepared." Another, who was eminent for his knowledge and learning, but who had been negligent of the great salvation, said, "It is lamentable, that men consider not for what they are born into the world, till they are ready to go out of it." Another, who was distinguished for his talents, his ambition, and his success in gaining worldly honours, not long before his death, cried out, "Oh, my poor soul ! what will become of thee ! whither wilt thou go !"

Have you, my young friend, never been in that situation, in which the world appeared a dream, a cheat, a nothing ? Have you never lain upon the bed of sickness, and passed wearisome days and sleepless nights of languor or of pain ? Have you never been in such circumstances, as to expect that a few days or weeks would end your mortal course ; fix your body in the grave, and your soul in eternity ? and have you forgotten what were then your views and feelings ? Did the world appear as enchanting to you

then as it does now? Did the soul and its salvation, then seem a thing of little moment? Rather, did not the world seem vanity of vanities? Were you now on a bed of sickness, or languishing and dying, would not these be your views? And must not you, ere long, be in such a situation? And will you not then confess, that the only thing that deserves your care, is the immortal soul? O why neglect it, when you might secure its salvation! Why put off entering the way of life, till that way is shut for ever? By the testimonies of others to the worth of the soul, and by the convictions of your own mind, I beseech you to secure its salvation, by applying, without delay, to the Son of God for life.

Reflect on the interest taken in the welfare of your soul, by those who are best acquainted with its worth. Angels are not uninterested, where the soul is concerned. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, "over one sinner that repenteth." O, shall these happy spirits take so much interest in the welfare of the soul, and will you yourself be careless! Shall they be willing to minister to you, as unseen messengers of love; and will you neglect that soul, over which they would fain rejoice; whose mortal course they would cheerfully attend; and

which they would gladly conduct to the bosom of Christ!

But it is not merely the inferior, though glorious, inhabitants of heaven, whose conduct testifies the worth of the soul. God, the great and blessed God, has so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, to be a ransom for the ruined souls of men and Jesus Christ, the brightness of his Father's glory, has suffered and died, to redeem immortal souls from death. O, learn the worth of your immortal spirit, from what passed on Calvary in its behalf. See the God of glory resigning his best Beloved to unbridled fury, stripes, and death; to the torturing cross, the bloody spear, and the dismal grave. See the patient Son of God, accomplishing what none but he could perform, and bearing a load of human guilt and sorrow, more vast and dreadful than any tongue can tell. See this, and learn the value of your soul. And can it be to you a matter of little moment, whether your immortal soul is saved or lost!

As thus, in the most affecting manner, the Father and the Son have declared the value of the soul, so also, my young friend, learn the same, from all which the blessed Spirit does, for the salvation of sinful men. He strives with them. It is by his light that they discern the Father and the Son. Has

not he exerted his power in your heart? Have not you felt those convictions of sin and folly, those devout impressions, and salutary desires, which really came from above? Has not the still small voice within, as it were, said to you, 'Turn to God; forsake the world: your ways lead to misery, they will be bitterness in the end; follow religion and be happy?' Have not you banished the warning, and quenched the holy thoughts and desires, thus given you from above? Yet has he left you? Has not your conscience been alarmed, and these sacred impressions been repeated again and again? Why does the blessed Spirit thus strive with you? Why did he not take your first repulse, and leave you for ever? Why has he followed you with these salutary warnings? You did not seek them. Why has he made your heart at times almost begin to melt? Why let you feel the sting of sin? Why alarmed you at your situation? Why showed you your danger? Why induced you at times, if you would go no further, yet to wish you were a Christian? To wish that you were like some that you perhaps know? Why has the blessed Spirit bestowed all this care, on a poor, thoughtless, ungrateful creature, whose heart has been shut against his gentle influence? Why, my young friend, but because he wishes you

well for ever? God would not have you perish. Shall angels, shall the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all, all express concern for the welfare of your soul, and will you slight that soul yourself?

If, to all this evidence of the worth of your soul, I add more, it shall be, that even the malice of devils may teach you the value of your soul. You are taught in the word of God, that "Satan walketh about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." You are assured, that he comes and takes away the seed sown in the careless heart. He knows what heaven is, for he has lost it; he knows what immortality is, for he is doomed to it; and his artifices, his assaults, his watchfulness, his activity, in the dreadful work of destruction, prove how highly he values the immortal soul. No watchfulness seems to him too much, for the accomplishment of its ruin. Though you may be inactive, he is activity itself. Though you may be negligent and slothful in seeking the salvation of your soul, he is watchful and diligent in seeking its destruction.

The word of God is a sure guide to heaven, and calls upon you, at all events, to embrace religion. It teaches you that this is true wisdom, and all else folly. That this is the "one thing needful," the "good part."

It teaches you to seek this, whatever you lose by pursuing it; to embrace it, though at the expense of all you possess; to hold it fast, though that or life must be resigned. It teaches you that, in possessing the blessings of religion, you would possess every good, and that the want of them is worse than hunger, poverty, or pain; prisons or martyrdom. That if you enjoy the Saviour's love, it is a matter of very little importance what you suffer, for here will be found enough to make amends for all; and that if you have not this, it signifies little what you possess, for the want of this is the want of every thing that is worth the thoughts or wishes of an immortal soul.

The judgment of the blessed God, as to the importance of real piety, and of piety in youth, is solemnly given in his word. There his beloved Son, and his inspired messengers speak, in his name, to you; and, O God of mercy, give my youthful readers grace to listen to those admonitions of thine, that I would now repeat to them. Behold then, my young friend, "Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? One thing is needful. Seek ye first

the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Enter ye in at the strait gate ; strive to enter in ; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Ye must be born again. Behold the Lamb of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Lay hold on eternal life. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. I love them that love me ; and they that seek me early shall find me."

These important admonitions, are the admonitions of your God. Religion is the blessing which they teach you to choose ; a blessing which makes the poorest rich ; and without which the wealthiest are poor. The Lord Jesus, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, gave it as his solemn and deliberate judgment, that but "one thing is needful." Compared with it, all that man deems most important, is an insignificant trifle. His wisdom, folly. His business and cares, laborious idling. His pomps and pleasures, as vain as the play of children ; and his possessions, as worthless as their toys. One thing is needful.

O, my young friend, remember that if you were as poor as Lazarus, as afflicted as Job, as persecuted as Paul, the love of Christ would make you happy. And O consider that without this you must be a miserable

wretch, though you were to live in wealth, pomp, pleasure, and even royal splendour.

While the divine Saviour represents real religion as an infinitely important blessing, his word directs you to exert all the earnestness of your soul in its pursuit. You are exhorted to "labour for the meat which endureth unto eternal life; to labour to enter into rest; to strive to enter in at the strait gate; to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." He calls on you to run with the perseverance of a racer; to sacrifice every good for this one, in the spirit of a merchant, who would sell his all, to buy one immensely valuable pearl; to fight, with the resolution of a soldier, determined to conquer or die; and even to suffer, with the constancy of a martyr, sooner than by neglecting himself to lose eternal life. In two most impressive passages, has the divine Saviour given this last exhortation. "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The loss of mortal life, he teaches you to look upon as a little thing if the soul is but safe. "And if thy hand offend (ensnare) thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and



the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend (ensnare) thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend (ensnare) thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Not merely does the Son of God command you, to part with toys and trinkets for his sake; but, if any thing as dear and useful as your hand, your foot, your eye, would ensnare your soul, you must part with such a beloved but destructive object; and esteem no sufferings too great to encounter, when life eternal is at stake. To cut off a right hand, to amputate a right foot, to tear out a right eye, would be to nature dreadfully severe! yet his direction is, if any thing which it would cost you as much pain to resign, as to do all this, should endanger your salvation, bear the pain; and, whatever the body suffers, take care that the soul is not undone. Most of the Lord's hearers were the poor; and to them the right hand is peculiarly important, as by its labour their support is earned; and thus warned they might but linger out the re-

mainder of a wretched existence. Taking these things into consideration, it is as if he had said, Salvation is the one thing needful; and think nothing too precious to be resigned on its account; what though any thing as dear and important to you, as the hand that earns your food, the foot on which you pursue your labours, the eye which warns you of a thousand dangers, and which is the source of a thousand satisfactions; what though any thing, ~~thus~~ dear and useful, should ensnare your immortal soul, yet part with it; yes, part with it, though it cost you as much exquisite torture to do so, as it would to tear the tender eye from its socket, and to cut away the right hand and foot from the body they support and adorn. Part with the dear cause of destruction, though, through its loss, the rest of your days were even to be spent in misery and want. Yet mind not the miseries of an hour, to escape those of eternity; mind not all that a feeble body can endure, to escape the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched. It is better to enter into eternal life, with this loss and suffering, than to perish for ever. Better, far better, were it for you, to go, ~~1~~ needful, through pain, and want, and wretchedness to heaven; than through comfort, and ease, and prosperity to hell. So

lemn and awakening charge! O that it were felt by every heart! Awful, awful warning, repeated six times over by a compassionate Saviour's lips, that there, the fire never shall be quenched.

Will you, my young friend, listen to his words? now give your youth to God, and receive the blessed Jesus as your all in all? If you refuse, O may the God of mercy grant, that wherever you go in your mad career of business or of pleasure, the words of Christ may follow you, and still thunder in your ear, that in that dismal abode, whither sin and folly lead the soul, the fire never shall be quenched! Flee then from it! Flee for your life! Flee for your soul! If milder motives have not moved you, what can awaken you, if this warning of the Lord's cannot? Flee from the dear delights of sin! They conduct to that hell, where the fire never, never, never, shall be quenched. Flee from sins, that have ruled you to the present hour! or they will shortly fix you, where the worm of remorse and despair, can never, never die. Flee, or ere long the fire of hell, flashing in your face, will tell you that your day of grace is past; and the worm that never dieth, rising in your soul, will sting you with inexpressible and everlasting sorrows,

VII. — DIVINE LOVE A REASON FOR EARLY PIETY.

HISTORY relates that one of those happy and triumphant saints, who passed through the sorrows of martyrdom, to the glories of heaven, just before he expired, lifting up his burning hands, from the midst of the flames, exclaimed, "None but Christ; none but Christ." In this and ten thousand other instances, martyrdom itself was cheerfully borne, through love to the adorable Saviour. But whence sprung this fervent love? The apostle's words reply, "We love him because he first loved us." My young friend, let me call your attention to this most pleasing, and most powerful motive, for devoting your youth to God. Martyrs loved their God, because he had first loved them. Martyrs died for their Redeemer, because he had first died for them; but consider, I beseech you, that all which was done for them, was done for you. That love which won their hearts, has been manifested for you, as well as them. God, in the gospel, is as kind to you, as he was to them; heaven as open to you, as it was to them; and Jesus has died for you, as well as for them.

The gift of Christ is uniformly represented in the Scriptures, as caused by the love of God. That blessed book assures us that the divine Redeemer did all that he did, and

endured all that he endured, in consequence of the love of God to a ruined world. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Does the motive of a giver, enhance the value of a gift? how then should you value Jesus, the best gift of God! In the gospel the infinite Lord of lords is displayed, as stooping from the throne of his eternal majesty, to interest himself in your behalf; and love to helpless and guilty man, appears the directing motive, even in the conduct of the Most High. "God so loved the world!"

The love of God was enhanced, by his knowledge of the deep abasement and cruel neglect, which awaited his beloved Son. Before time began, he was intimately acquainted with all that would occur in time; and before Jesus left the bosom of the Father, he foresaw through what scenes his beloved Son would pass. He saw the Saviour on the cross, before the cross was formed; and heard his expiring groan, before that groan was uttered. The Most High knew that the blessed Jesus would not be loved, admired, and followed; he knew, that gracious friend of sinners would have, for his attendants, a few despised and persecu-

ted men, would be without a dwelling, except the chance one which a few friends afforded, and sometimes, in the most literal sense, without a place to lay his head. He knew that the shouts which awaited his beloved Son were, "Crucify him, crucify him; away with him; not this man but Barabbas, his blood be on us, and on our children." This was the reception the blessed Sufferer met with, from the world he came to save; a reception foreseen by his heavenly Father, who displayed his own boundless love, in bestowing such a gift on such a world. Well might Christ say, God SO loved the world. His compassion is beyond description. O the heights, and breadths, and depths, and lengths of the love of God! "It is higher than heaven, what canst thou know! deeper than hell, what canst thou do! the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

And now, my young friend, what does th' love demand? Can you give that gracious God too much, who gave his Son for you? Can you too soon give him your all? O, would you part with a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a friend, to redeem even another friend from distress and ruin? but your much injured God has resigned his beloved Son to death, to redeem you from perishing. He has done this not for friends,

but enemies ; thus has he commended his love ; for enemies, wilful, wicked, hell-deserving enemies. Shall all this be lost upon you ? Had some friend, by hazarding his life for you, snatched you from a burning house, or raging sea, how warm would have been your professions of gratitude ! But God has given Jesus, to snatch you from more dreadful danger, even when he knew that his beloved Son would fall a victim to his compassion. How frozen is your heart if such goodness does not melt it into penitence and love ! Gracious Almighty, what can we render unto thee ? we, bought by the blood of thy Son ; we, redeemed by thy best beloved ; we, whose sins he has borne, whose sorrows he has carried ; we, rescued from the flaming pit of misery, not at the mere hazard of his life, but by that invaluable life, and by sufferings more than human, what can we offer — but ourselves ! By all this matchless love, I beseech you to be reconciled to God. O harden not your heart against your best Benefactor ; be not your own worst enemy, when God would be your kindest friend. O withhold not your youth from him, who has such infinite claims upon you ! It has been justly said of ingratitude, that it is, “ of vices first, most infamous and most accurst.” It was the sin of Satan ; but O, my youthful reader, how

deeply will you be polluted with it, if you refuse to give your youth to God ! His kindness to you through successive years, in infancy, in childhood, in youth, in health, in sickness, claims your heart ; but, O the gift of his Son ! If you had ten thousand hearts, the love there manifested would claim them all ; and will you deny him that one ? Too long has it been shut against him, while sin and folly have triumphed in your breast ; but shall it be shut against him still ? Shall sin and folly still be preferred to a most kind compassionate God ? Had you ten thousand lives, the love of God would demand them all ; O then refuse him not that little span of life, which is all you will ever have in this world !

From contemplating the love of God the Father, pass on to view that of his Almighty Son. Though the Father gave his best beloved, yet Jesus came not by compulsion, but to be a WILLING victim.

His language was, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." He declared, "I lay down my life. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich."

Follow him in your thoughts, from his throne of glory, 'to his poor manger, and

his bitter cross,' and mark the painful steps he trod; then may you feel that never love was like his love, and never sorrow like his sorrow. He was the inhabitant of heaven before the world was formed. Eternal glories were his; all the riches of heaven were his portion; and angels and archangels bowed at his feet. The happiness of the meanest of his disciples, in the heavenly world, is inexpressible. O what then was the glory which the Son of God had with the Father "before the world was," when "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God!" yet all this did he lay aside for you for me. He came from a world where no sorrows enter, to a world of sorrow and distress. Born in poverty, he continued so poor, that he could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He was wearied with labours. He wept over wretched men, whom he saw ruining themselves, for this world, and the next. And, O my young friend, if you are unacquainted with his grace, were he upon earth again, he might weep for you. He would see your danger, if you see it not. He would know the worth of your soul, though you may know it not; and would see in all its horrors, the precipice whence you are falling, and the state of misery into which you are plunging. After he had manifested

his love to man, by his instructions, his tears, his prayers, his labours, and his institutions, at length the last sad scene of his innocent life drew on ; and now, behold the man ! See him in the garden of Gethsemane, weighed down with inward sorrow. "My soul," said he, "is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He was so overwhelmed, with a horrid mixture of distress and anguish, that he prayed, if it were possible, the painful cup might pass from him ; but he added, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." He saw the world lying in wickedness, and ready to drop into eternal flames, and the iniquities of millions were meeting upon him ; but though oppressed by more terrors than any of his martyred followers ever felt, he would not let go a sinking world. Yet his unspeakable agony continued so dreadful, that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Was there any sorrow like his sorrow ! Stop not here ; he who went to Calvary for you, had not reached it yet. See him betrayed by the kiss of a traitor. Behold the injustice, the insults, the ignominy of his mock trial. And now, behold the man ; clad in the robe of mock majesty ; his head crowned with thorns, and streaming with blood ; his face bruised with blows ; his body torn by scourges. Was ever love like his love ! He is condemned — and now

see him carrying his cross, execrated, and despised. Dreadful was his path to Calvary; but he reached it at last; yet not to escape from his sorrows; these would only end with his life. Behold him at the fatal spot. See the cross formed; see him extended on it; yet even there he prays, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Listen to the strokes of the hammer, that drives the nails through his hands and feet. Mark the gushing blood. See the cross raised from the earth, on which it lay, and let down with a jerk into the hole in which it should stand, that this might torture more the agonized body that hung upon it. Through six long hours of indescribable misery, behold the Divine Sufferer thus suspended; execrated by earth; insulted by his cruel foes; and even, in appearance, deserted by Heaven, when he uttered that mournful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" His Father seemingly deserted his best Beloved, for a time, that he might be able to receive you, a poor sinful wanderer and make you his for ever. At length he expired. What a scene followed! Rocks rending, graves opening, midnight darkness at noon day. Was it an emblem of that everlasting darkness which shall overwhelm an ungodly world! or would heaven hide the dishonours of its Lord! When he left his

throne of glory, he knew that all this was to befall him ; and he so loved our wretched and guilty race, that the view of all these dreadful scenes prevented not his coming. He came to save ; and is able to save unto the uttermost.

The love of Christ is displayed by the free and gracious invitations in his word. "Come," saith he, "come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." As much as if he had said, 'Come from every nation ; Come in every age ; Come from every rank of life ; Come from every class of sinners ; Come ye, who, feeling the burden most oppressive, are almost driven to despair. Come all ; for ye cannot come in such multitudes that I cannot help you. Ye cannot come so burdened that I cannot relieve you. Ye cannot come so wretched that I will not save you. Come then, and I will on no account whatever, cast you out.'

The love of Jesus does not stop here. If you, my young friend, become truly his, it will attend you through all the seasons of life, in the hour of death, and into the eternal world. He is to his friends, the guide of youth and the support of age. Not changeable like many earthly friends, not frail like all. The same is his love to his disciples

now, as it was to those who first obeyed his gospel; for "he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is the shepherd of his flock, and guards them with an ever-watchful eye. He knows their wants, he administers to their comfort, he hears their prayers, and feels their sorrows. Such is his feeling for his friends, that they are represented as his flesh and bones. And when Paul persecuted them, he said, "Why persecutest thou ME?" He proportions their trials to their strength, and says to each, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Nor does he permit those trials to befall the weak Christian, which the strong only could bear. Had I felt, said one of his disciples, as strong assaults against my faith, while I was young, as I have done since, I am not sure it would have escaped an overthrow. He is the intercessor for his people in his Father's presence, is still engaged with their concerns; and is gone to prepare mansions for their reception, and soon will come to fetch his followers home. If you are his, he will support you through life, and uphold you when the awful hour of death draws nigh. If you partake of his love, having loved you he will love you to the end. Though friends and kindred, the nearest and the dearest die, the Christian has one Friend, who is always near, and always gracious; and when death itself is

past, will find the Saviour's love greater than any heart conceived.

Can you measure the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of all his love? It is impossible. Such love demands the return of gratitude and love. The affection and tenderness of parents or friends, has made you love them in return; but what parents, what friends, ever showed so much concern for your happiness, as the Son of God has done? They have not left a throne in heaven, suffered persecution on earth, and died a painful death for you: Jesus only has done this. Their kindness bears no comparison to his; and if theirs wins so much of your affection, does not his deserve far more? Can you offer him too much, who gave up so much for you? Can you love him too much, whose love led him to endure an afflicted life and a tormenting death for you? Can you think of the redeemer's goodness, and yet treat him with neglect? Would any one else do for you what the Lord has done? Would the gay world that perhaps tempts you to slight him, bear such sufferings for you? It is related of Colonel Gardiner, that at the time of his wonderful conversion, he apprehended that there was before him a visible representation of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross; and he was impressed, as if a voice had come to him to this effect:

‘O sinner, did I suffer this for thee, and are these thy returns!’ If you have hitherto neglected religion, might not the Son of God, if he were to appear, justly say to you, ‘Young sinner, behold these hands, these hands endured the nails for you; will you, by preferring sin to me open these wounds again? Will you dare to crucify me afresh? Behold this side, this side was pierced for you; will you pierce it deeper still by your neglect? Behold this head, this head was torn by the thorny crown for you; will you add fresh pangs to what I then endured, by forgetting him who never forgot you’ Did I bear scoffs, the scourge, the cross, slow torture, inward and outward agony, and lingering death for you, and are sin and neglect your returns?” O what answer could you give to questions like these! surely tears would start from your eyes, remorse tear your heart, and confusion cover your face. And do you think the blessed Jesus endured the less, or loved the less, because he is not here, to tell you the greatness of his sufferings and his love? Can you look on him, afflicted, tormented, suspended between heaven and earth, covered with blood, and sinking beneath an intolerable load of sorrow; can you look back to Calvary, and continue to treat him thus? I know the world tempts you to do so, but will you let

the world prevail? Did he leave heaven, and the brightest throne of glory, to encounter such horrors for you, and will you not give up what the vain world can offer, for him? Let it do its best; were its riches, pleasures, and honours yours, are these things better than the heaven, to which Jesus offers to lead you? He came to save the lost, will you refuse to let him save you? The graves opened, and the rocks rent at his crucifixion; shall graves open sooner than your heart, and even rocks be softer? Unless you turn to him, as far as you are concerned, all his love will be in vain. As to you, it will be in vain that he came from heaven, and became the poor man of sorrows. As to you, it will be in vain that his hands, his feet, his side were pierced, and that he became the sufferer of the cross, the victim of death. O let him not have to say to you, "You will not come to me that you might have life." Flee to him for salvation. O give him your youth! Trust him with your soul. Make him your all in all; and in him be blessed for time and eternity. But if you refuse to do this, if you continue to slight his love, and to deny him all that such goodness claims; then, young sinner, expect hereafter no gentle flames, no tolerable damnation; for know that the deepest and most wretched



hell will not be more dreadful than such iniquity will deserve. Your sin will be nothing less, than preferring Satan, who tries every method in his power for your destruction, to that blessed Friend who bore such sorrows for you. You will be covered with a load of ingratitude, blacker, in one respect, than that which sunk the devil and his angels to the lake of fire; they sinned against a gracious God, but, if you continue to slight the gospel, you will sin against a gracious God and a suffering Saviour too. Even devils themselves may then rise up in the judgment, to condemn you, and to declare those who could be insensible to such goodness, and indifferent to such a friend, in this respect at least, more horribly wicked than themselves.

VIII.—EARLY PIETY PECULIARLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, AND PECULIARLY HONOURED BY HIM.

THE affection of earthly relatives and friends you doubtless esteem of much importance to your happiness; but there is one infinitely greater Friend, whose approbation is of more consequence, than that of all earthly friends united. The King of kings deigns to regard early piety as peculiarly acceptable to himself, and this is a

weighty reason for its choice. The esteem and love of mortal friends, if obtained in youth, and enjoyed through following years, and if ever so important for all the term of life, will sink into insignificance itself, when death shall dislodge your soul from its feeble habitation, and eternity receive you to its endless abodes. But to possess that early acquaintance with Christ, that early piety which is peculiarly pleasing to God, will most nearly concern you, long after you have done with the world; long after not one trace of you or yours remains on earth; long after the shroud, that dress of the grave, and the coffin, that dwelling of the dead, are mixed and lost in the dust that covers them; long after the graves have given up their dead; and the Judge fixed their eternal doom. Tell me, my young friend, of that worldly concern, which will be of any importance to you, when the year 2000 comes. Alas! you cannot. The world then, as now, may be gay and thoughtless, but to you, long, long, long ere that period comes, there will not remain one bitter dreg of any worldly sorrow, or one pleasing memorial of any worldly joy. The sun may shine as brightly then for others, the earth be as gaily dressed for them as now for you; but long ere that time arrives, those who are in vigorous youth, or decrepid age, will be mixed in the

same dust. The clods of the valley, almost for ages, will have covered both, alike forgetful of a busy or a pleasurable world. The grass of the field, for years and years, will have flourished and faded, about the spot where you and I shall lie. O vain and passing world! how wretchedly are that youth, and health, and strength mispent, which are employed for thee! Seek, my young friend, a better portion than such a world can give. Pursue His favour, whose favour will be found better than life, when the world itself has passed away like a shadow, that vanishes when the sun goes down.

While piety, in any situation or age, is pleasing to the Most High, yet youthful piety has peculiar charms. No sight upon earth is more lovely, than to see young persons, in the very bloom of life, devoting themselves to the Saviour, who died for them; and ornamenting his religion by giving it their best years. Religion may be regarded by the aged convert from sin and folly, but it must be honoured by the young, or by those who were religious in the prime of their days. Early piety is peculiarly pleasing to the blessed Jesus. Hear him saying, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." One of the last commands he gave to Peter was, "Feed lambs." The apostle John was his

young disciple, but he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

The marked and honourable distinction, which God has placed on early piety, strikingly shows, how peculiarly acceptable it is to him. He has made few, except those converted in early life, instruments of advancing, to any considerable degree, his glory upon earth. Late converts have generally crept, as it were, singly into heaven; while many converted young have been employed by God, to lead their friends, their children, or many others of their fellow creatures, to the abodes of bliss. As by early piety, the young peculiarly honour God, so he condescends, in return, peculiarly to honour them. Run over the names, which God has distinguished in his word, and observe, they were converted young. If we come to later times, still God seems seldom to have conferred distinguished honour, except on early piety. Baxter and Owen, Doddridge and Watts, Wesley and Whitfield, and hundreds more, that were in their day employed to lead thousands to heaven, were all converted young. Almost, if not quite, every Missionary now publishing the gospel in heathen lands, sought God in the days of youth. When God has thus distinguished youthful religion, would you neglect it? Would you delay to seek it? Rather I beseech you, yield

yourself a living sacrifice to him, who says, "They that seek me early shall find me."

We may discern various reasons, why the blessed Saviour should take early religion as a mark of regard to himself, that he will distinguish with particular approbation at another day;—that day when all the dear delusions and gay vanities of this world, will appear wretched vanities indeed. One of these is the decided affection to the Lord, which early piety displays. You suppose they love you most, who are ready to do the most for you; and, depend upon it, the blessed Jesus judges by a similar rule. Those who are most willing to honour him, and give him most, show most affection. If, in God's strength, you resolve that the Lord shall have those blooming years, which others spend in sin and folly, this will manifest the most decided preference for him. "I love my Saviour much," may be said by one converted in old age; but, "I have humbly proved I love him much," is a declaration that must be left to those converted in youth. They do not give their Lord merely the evening of a day whose best hours have been devoted to folly and to sin, but present him a better offering than it would ever otherwise be in their power to make. While your mind is not distracted with cares, nor your body worn with infirmities, nor your affec-

tions chilled with age ; but while health, and strength, and cheerfulness, and all the vigour of life are yours, is the season in which to make the best offering to your God. Before your soul is loaded with the black crimes of many ungrateful and wicked years, before your powers are enfeebled with the infirmities of old age, devote yourself "a living sacrifice" to God. "God," it is said, "loveth a cheerful giver." If this is true, where gifts of much inferior value are concerned, depend upon it, that it is so in the present case. The Lord loves the cheerful offering, which the young make of themselves to him, in the bloom and vigour of their days, better than the offering of a few sad dregs of life, which are wrung, as it were, from the aged and infirm. The affection of the young is also commonly the most fervent ; it glows with a stronger flame than that of age : and the young followers of the Lord resign their hearts to the impressions of his love, when most capable of loving him in return. They love him soonest, and are we to wonder if he loves them best ? Some, like Manasseh, after long years of rebellion, are driven at last by a heavy rod to penitence, and they are welcome ; but where is the late penitence of Manasseh celebrated, as equally acceptable to God with the early piety of Abijah, Josiah, Timothy, or John ? He loves all who

humbly love him, but those best, who, beginning soonest, love him most. If you would be truly pious, apply to God for grace to be so betimes. If you would have your piety peculiarly pleasing to the Lord, let it be the piety, the kindness of your youth. Would you thank any one to offer you a shell, with the kernel? or a stalk, when the flower were withered? or dross, when the gold were gone? and would you offer to the Lord the poor remains of a life, spent in the service of Satan? and after having wasted your youth, your health, your strength, your prime, would you give to Christ the leavings of the Devil? O act not so base a part! but if you would be pious, be so in these your early days! Then will they be your best days. Every year that departs will bring on a happier; and the last will be the happiest of all, because the last will land you in that world, where there is nothing out happiness.

Early piety also manifests the truest gratitude for the love of God. His love calls for thankfulness more fervent than any imagination can conceive, or tongue express: but by devoting your youth to him, you may give the best expression of gratitude in your power. You may say, "Great God, I owe thee more than it is in my power to conceive, much less to declare. I have no way of tes-

tifying gratitude equal to my obligations, but help me to show all the thankfulness I can. The warmest will be cold; the most will be little; but such as I am, take me; and by the offering of my youth, may I show that I am thankful, though I can never be thankful enough." It has been said, that in the war which divided the United States of America from England, a British commissioner offered a great bribe to a Mr. Reid, employed by the American government, and that he answered, "I am not worth purchasing, but such as I am, the king of Great Britain is not rich enough to do it." Be assured, it will be an acceptable token of your gratitude to God, if you treat the world as he treated the British commissioner. Say to it, "Begone, vain world, I am a poor insignificant creature, but such as I am, thou art not rich enough to buy me from my God; I owe him such a debt as I shall never through eternity discharge; but what little I can offer him, that little, with his help, I will."

Another circumstance that may render early piety peculiarly acceptable, is its rareness; for though most that come to Christ, come to him in youth, yet small is their number, compared with the multitudes that are strangers to the grace of God. Among the great, how many families are there in which

not one true Christian is to be found among the poor, the case is the same. Look at the factories and mills, where twenty, thirty, forty, or even hundreds are employed, and among scores, perhaps but one or two will be found, that sincerely love and follow Christ. True religion was never in fashion upon earth. In youth, even when free from what the world calls vice, there is often little to be found besides pride, vanity, and folly. That fair morning of life, which a few happily improve for the glory of God, and their own eternal welfare, most spend as if religion were no concern of theirs; as if they had no soul to save; no death to fear; no heaven to seek; no hell to escape. Many of the young followers of Christ have done their business for eternity, before others, their equals in age, had begun theirs for time; and have been ripe for an eternal weight of glory, before others had begun to think of everlasting things. The blessed Jesus sees the greater part of the young utterly careless of his dying love, or even treating religion as a thing unsuitable to youthful gaiety; but here and there he beholds a few, that are offering him their best years; and he beholds them with pleasure, and will remember the kindness of their youth. He who will remember even "a cup of cold water, given to a disciple," out of love to

himself, will never forget the humble resolutions of that young disciple, who says to him, "Blessed Redeemer, I would be more thy friend, because thou hast so few that are thy friends at all. Few offer thee any of their time, so I would offer thee all the rest of mine. Few show any gratitude for thy loving kindness, or thy dying love, but, O thou compassionate Saviour! take my youngest and best years, that thou mayest have all my life, since thou hast none of theirs."

IX. — THE ADVANTAGES OF EARLY RELIGION.

WHILE recommending early religion to you, think not that I wish to render you poor or unhappy. Far from it: I rather wish you to be truly rich, and truly happy, not merely for the little span, in which earthly pleasures or riches are enjoyed; not merely for a period so short, as ten thousand thousand ages, but for ever and ever. Where is that treasure to be found that will enrich you for eternity? Not amidst the wealth of this world. "Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me." Where are they that, but a few years back, possessed pleasures

and honours, parks and palaces, crowns and kingdoms? All vanished from the world.

“And now, ye lying vanities of life,
Ye ever tempting ever cheating train,
What are ye now, and what is your amount!”

While entreating you to pursue more solid good, I would recount to you some of the advantages of religion in youth.

Early piety is comparatively easy. The total corruption of man's heart is such, that, at every period of life, there are difficulties in turning to God in reality. At any time, it is needful, to strive to enter the strait gate; but it is much easier to turn to God in youth, than it is in later life. The heart is not then so hardened, as it is by a longer life of impenitence and sin. The Scriptures also clearly show to us the difficulty of conversion late in life, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.”

Before your sins are more multiplied, before your heart is hardened, before Satan gains a firmer hold upon you, O turn to God! Harden not your heart now, lest God, in righteous judgment, should harden it for ever. Employ not your best years in shutting the gate of life against yourself, or in filling with difficulties the only path-way to heaven. If a person with but one way from a precipice, were to employ himself, for

weeks and months, in stopping up that way, or in making his escape by it tenfold more difficult, how great would be his distraction ! If another, with one door opened, to let him escape from a dismal dungeon, were to spend the time, in which he should flee from prison and the gallows, in fastening up that one door, with bolts and bars, how great, how dismal would be his folly ! But, O my young friend, if you do not now turn to Jesus and to God, far greater will be yours ! By continuing careless of the Lord, you will fill with difficulties that one way of escaping from hell, which is now comparatively easy ; you will shut against yourself the door of mercy, by which you should flee from destruction ; and will make it tenfold more difficult for your own soul, to escape the flaming sword of divine justice ; the eternal prison which is never opened ; and the fire that never shall be quenched.

Another advantage attending early piety is, that it is that which is most honourable to God, and to yourself ; and it is that which has the fairest prospect of becoming eminent piety. Religion is honoured, when the young, but faithful votaries of the Lord, are seen renouncing the world in the prime of their lives. The world seems to imagine, that religion is only suited for gloom and age ; but they show that it has charms, that

win the hearts of the sprightly and the young. The world seems to suppose, that what Satan leaves is all that should be devoted to God ; but the young followers of the Lamb show, that such are the excellences of his service, that it calls for **their** youth, their health, their prime, **their** all ! How have the glories of religion been displayed, by those young converts, who, after a short course of humble piety, have bid an early, and yet joyful farewell to all beneath the sun ! who have seen no charms in this deluding world, sufficient to tempt their wish to stay ; but who have calmly departed to eternal rest, before they had passed even sixteen, eighteen, or twenty years below. Will not you, my young friend, make that offering to the Lord, which such have made ? Will not you tell a deluded world, that religion is better than life ?

Early piety is honourable, as it is that which is most likely to become eminent piety. When faith, and hope, and love, and holiness appear, in their fairest earthly form, then is religion honoured most : Who is it that bear most of these divine fruits ? Is it the late convert ? Ah, no ! “ Those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God, they shall **STILL** bring forth fruit in old age.” It is the piety of those who knew religion in ear-

lier life, that thus bears fruit in age ; and becomes eminent on earth, or is glorified in heaven. If, as many believe, there be various degrees of happiness and glory, in the eternal world, who have so fair a prospect of reaching the higher, as those who begin the soonest? A person setting out on a journey at daybreak, may travel further by noon, than he, who sets out at noon, would do by midnight. So in religion, they who yield their hearts to Christ in youth, may get much forwarder in the way to heaven, by middle life, than they could do, by extreme old age, if they were to put off the care of the soul to later years. Thus, every way, early religion has its advantages. If you now come to Christ, and should live to old age, he may make your piety more eminent here, and give a brighter crown hereafter ; or if you should die, as many do, in the prime of life, you will have lived long enough to find the way to glory and God.

“ Long do they live, nor die too soon,
Who live till life's great work is done.”

Whatever may befall you, nothing would come amiss, when either life or death were a blessing ; when a longer stay below might more mature the work of God in your soul, and a shorter one would remove you to speedier glory.

Early religion is not merely easy and honourable, but, in every view, profitable piety. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It brings its own reward; it will advance your temporal, spiritual, and eternal welfare. If you are rich, it would make you infinitely richer; would give you treasures, compared with which, the wealth of the world is lighter than a feather, weighed against mountains of gold. If poverty be your lot, this would make you partaker of these blessings, which constitute an angel's wealth. Though poor on earth, you would be rich in heaven. So profitable is true piety, that it would not merely be the source of numberless blessings, but would make all things blessings to you; pain and sorrow, as well as ease and comfort; sickness, as well as health; and death, as well as life.

Glance at a few of the blessings, as described in the Scriptures, which the real possessors of religion enjoy. "There is joy, at their conversion, in the presence of the angels of God; joy over one sinner that repenteth. They are born of God; are new creatures in Christ Jesus; in them old things pass away, and all things become new. They are blessed, for their transgression is forgiven, and their sin is covered. While

the world lieth in wickedness, condemned and perishing, there is no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus. They have passed from death to life. Though their sins were as scarlet, they are white as snow; and though they were red like crimson, they are as wool. Jesus is the propitiation for their sins; they have redemption through his blood. They are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. They are accepted in the Beloved; and by the Father are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and have a hope laid up for them in heaven. Being justified by faith they have peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. They have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. The world is without Christ, without hope, and without God; but they are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God. Even on earth they belong to heaven, for they are come unto the city of the living God; and to an innumerable company of angels; and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. The Father giveth them a place in his house,

They are even the children of God, and ~~in~~ children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon them, that they should be called the sons of God; nor doth it yet appear what they shall be; but they know that when He shall appear, they shall be like him. for they shall see him as he is. In their Father's house are many mansions; and their Lord is gone to prepare a place for them; and will come again and take them to himself, that where he is, they may be also. While such is their hope for eternity, here, they are led by the Spirit of God; are temples of the Holy Spirit; and God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. They are the objects of the eternal Father's tender care. The eternal God is their refuge. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them; and loves them with a love more tender than that of earthly parents; for he is their Father, though Abraham be ignorant of them, and though Isaac acknowledge them not; and if even father and mother forsook them, the Lord would take them up. The Father loveth them because they believe on Christ, and hath set them apart for himself. They may cast all their care upon him, for he careth for them. Their Father knoweth that they have need of

earthly mercies ; he will withhold no good thing from them ; but to his other blessings will give them grace and glory. He will never leave them nor forsake them ; but with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but his kindness shall not depart from them. No weapon formed against them shall prosper. He watches them with a father's tender care ; behold the eye of the Lord is upon the righteous. He will enable them to overcome their mightiest foes, even Satan, will the God of peace bruise under their feet shortly. The very hairs of their head are all numbered. They have access to God ; he hears their secret prayers, and will reward them openly. Their fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Their effectual fervent prayer availeth much. Jesus is their divine Shepherd. They shall not want. He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom. They follow him, and he giveth them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of his hand. They are branches of Christ the living vine ; are members of his body ; are lights of the world ; salt of the earth. When Christ describes their character he pronounces them blessed

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; they shall be comforted; they shall inherit the promised land; shall be filled; shall obtain mercy and see God. When the world persecutes and reviles them, their reward is great in heaven. Their life is hid with Christ in God. Jesus calls them his friends. The blessed angels of heaven are employed on errands of love on their behalf, and are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them; and those happy spirits have a charge given them to keep them. Their names are written in heaven; are recorded in the book of life. They form a little flock, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. For them a rest remains; and eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. The Father himself loveth them; and is willing to grant their requests; but they have also a great Intercessor in heaven, to add weight to their requests; therefore they may go boldly to the throne of grace. Christ ever liveth to make intercession for them; he is their Advocate; and while he pleads above, gives them all needful grace below. He gives them strength; and left them peace; and the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, shall keep their

hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. To them to live is Christ, and to die is gain; and as their souls are committed to his care, he will keep what they commit unto him. Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or nakedness, or famine, or peril, or the sword? Nay, in all these things they are more than conquerors, through him that hath loved them: for neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. Though they are, at best, but unprofitable servants, yet their Lord will own, and infinitely reward, their little services; so that even a cup of cold water, given to one of his disciples, out of love to him, shall in no wise lose its reward. When they speak often to one another, the Lord hearkens, and a book of remembrance is written before him, for them that thus fear him, and think on his name. Blessed are they, they do his commandments, and have a right to the tree of life, and to enter in through the gates, into the heavenly city. Though they must die, yet their end is peace. If this earthly house of their tabernacle be dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made

with hands, eternal in the heavens. When absent from the body they are present with the Lord. The day they depart they are with him in Paradise. There they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; they dwell before the throne of God; and there is no night there. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, will feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. At length the Judge will descend; then even that body which was sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption, it was sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory. This mortal shall put on immortality; and the Judge their Saviour will say to his friends, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world; and they shall go away into everlasting life; and shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father for ever. Thus all things are theirs, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!"

Does not your heart, my young friend,

burn within you, when reviewing such a catalogue of blessings? yet it is an imperfect one, and the half is not yet told. Do you not exclaim, Let these blessings be mine. They may be yours. Listen to Jesus; commit your soul to him; give him your youth; and they shall be yours. O what treasures can vie with these! The Christian with all these blessings is rich in every sense; rich for time, but richer for eternity. Crowns soon fall from the heads that wear them; parks and palaces soon vanish from their possessors; but the riches of the believer infinitely surpass them all. What can they want, who possess such blessings as have been enumerated? To them what situation can be destitute of comfort? Does their possessor look upwards? It is to his eternal home. Does he look downward, and see the grave at his feet? The grave, which bounds the hopes, and ends the joys of others, is to him but a dark passage to eternal day. He has friends, compared with whose friendship that of all the mightiest monarchs upon earth, is as insignificant as that of a creeping worm; his God, his Saviour. The young Christian may say, God is mine; Jesus is mine; angels my future companions, and heaven my home.

A most inestimable advantage attending early piety is, that its possessors will enjoy

the Saviour's everlasting love: "Whosoever," saith he, "shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." In youth and in age the best blessings flow from his love. He guides the inexperienced feet of his friends, 'to fairer worlds on high.' In youth his precepts direct, in age his promises support them. His love is an everlasting love. Within the contracted bounds of mortal life, he displays but a small portion of that love, of which eternity itself will be perpetually making fresh discoveries. The real Christian may exclaim, Take wing, my soul, pass beyond these mortal things, 'beyond the flaming bounds of time,' beyond the 'last and loved, though dreadful day.' Take wing, my soul, pass in thy thoughts beyond all these ; but, O ! to what world, to what age wilt thou go, where Jesus shall cease to love thee, or cease to bless thee ! Nay, thou shalt be for ever with the Lord. He who, for thee, was content with the manger for his palace, and thorns for his crown, will never forsake thee. He whose love to thee, shone forth so strongly, amidst the clouds of worldly sorrow, will not love thee less, now he is surrounded by the splendours of eternal glory. Nor death, nor life, nor evil angels, principalities, nor powers, nothing within the circle of time, nothing within the expanse of eter-

nity, nothing here, nothing hereafter, shall part his humble, faithful, friends and him. Blessed Jesus, the treasure of eternity shall be thy affection ; the boast, the bliss of eternity, shall be thy love. O happy they, who enjoy the love of Jesus Christ, though with the loss of all the world ! Happy even they who died to secure it ! happy martyrs who bled to keep it ! happy they who have sought it in youth, though at the expense of every friend besides, of every comfort, and of life itself ! Yes, happy martyrs, happy sufferers, who sought and found his love, when all the world hated them for seeking it ! They have it still. Their persecutions are no more. Their friends, from whose bosoms they were torn, and whose hearts perhaps bled to see them bleed, have long since gone to the chambers of the dead ; but they have not lost the love of Jesus, nor will they through eternal days. God of heaven, teach my youthful reader to count all things dross compared with this most precious blessing !

Connected with the last blessing, is the equally inestimable one of the eternal Father's love. If brought, through his dear Son, into his family, you will become the object of his tenderest care. It is far more possible, not merely for one, but for every mother, to forget the infant babe she fondles in her bosom, than for that great but bless-

ed God to cease to love his children ! What can be more pleasing than to hear that he, though so infinite in power and majesty, is not ashamed to be called their God ; but has prepared for them a dwelling, where his own hand shall wipe every tear from every eye, and where he will own and love them, as his children, for ever and ever ? When the Danish missionaries, in India, appointed some of their Indian converts to translate a catechism, in which it was mentioned, as the privilege of Christians, to become the sons of God, one of the translators, startled at so bold a saying, as he thought it, said, " It is too much ; let me rather render it, they shall be permitted to kiss his feet." Too great indeed we might have supposed such privileges, if God himself had not so plainly revealed them. Too vast we might have supposed such love, if God himself had not so clearly manifested, in the gift of Christ, that nothing is too vast for love like his. If you remember your Creator in the days of your youth, he will manifest all this love to you ; he will guide you safely through a thousand snares, and keep you from those evils, which beset your slippery path. Yes, young man, or young woman, many, whom the Lord has guided, are already in heaven ; and many a thoughtless th, that has refused his guidance, is lift-

ing up his eyes in hell, while you are reading these lines. Make God your guide, and he will guide you safely to his eternal kingdom; and love you with everlasting kindness there. Then may you say, "This God is my God for ever and ever; he will be my guide even unto death; and when my flesh and heart fail, he shall be the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

Another advantage of early religion is, that its possessors avoid the evil of an entirely unprofitable life. It is, my young friend, an awful fact, that while destitute of early piety, you answer none of the ends of your being. You are unprofitable to God, for you bring him no glory; you are unprofitable to Christ, for you make him no thankful returns for all his dying love. You are unprofitable to the world around you; your associates are not encouraged, by your example, to follow the ways of peace; but, by your negligence and folly, are hardened in their sins. You are unprofitable to your dearest relatives. If they are the friends of Christ, instead of cheering them by your piety, your irreligion is their grief and sorrow; and if they are unacquainted with the gospel, instead of striving to lead them to a concern for its blessings, you go madly with them to destruction. You are unprofitable to yourself, for, alas! while negligent of God, you are adding sin to sin,

and are making the heavy load of your transgressions heavier; are filling up the measure of your iniquities; and thus you are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. O wretched youth! and would you live but to make your own hell the more dreadful? your own perdition the more awful? Would you live a cumberer of the ground? useless, as the mischievous thistle? baneful, as the deadly nightshade? and, in the sight of God, hateful, as the poisonous serpent? Were it even certain that God would spare you to repent at some future time, yet, through mere delay, how many barren, and worse than useless years, would you pass? The late convert loses much peace and joy; much holiness and happiness; many opportunities of serving God; and much of that grace, of which even the youngest never obtained enough. Should you delay obeying the gospel, you will lose much grace here, and then may expect to lose much glory hereafter; and even if a pardoned penitent at last, might have to utter such a wish, as the celebrated Earl of Rochester is said to have uttered; he wished that he had been a crawling leper in a ditch, a link-boy, or beggar, or had lived in a dungeon, rather than have dishonoured God, as he had done. Surely that is no trifling blessing, by which such evils may be avoided.

But, my young friend, reverse this scene. Imagine religion to be your early choice : Jesus chosen betimes as your Lord, and prized as your salvation ; and God adored as your God ; and, O how changed do all things appear ! Then would you, in some humble measure, glorify his dear name, who bought you with his blood. Then would you recommend his gospel, and display the influence of his love. The blessed God would be honoured by you ; his will done in you ; his glory promoted in your life ; and advanced by your example. Then would you be profitable to your dearest friends. Are they pious, how would they rejoice over you ; and lay down their heads more calmly in the dust, when leaving a beloved child, to fill up their place in the church of Christ below, when they depart to that above. O my young friend, if you have parents, whose prayers have long ascended to God in your behalf, gladden their hearts, by choosing their God for yours ; let them say over you, " This my son, or, this my daughter, was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found."

But perhaps you reply, " My parents and friends are altogether unacquainted with religion ; they live careless of God, and have taught me to do the same." Alas ! if this is the case, it is a lamentable one ; yet, perhaps,

youthful piety might render you profitable to them. Do you love them, and can you bear the thought of soon losing them for ever, or of meeting them only in that miserable world, where affection never enters? Yet this must be, if you and they make light of Jesus and salvation. Much as you may love each other now, all that love will be forgotten, if you should together be banished to everlasting darkness and despair; and would you not save them from that dreadful ruin? O! if you would, remember your Creator in the days of your youth, and perhaps this may lead them to think of those things which belong to their everlasting peace. Mr. Baxter relates, that at Kidderminster, which under his ministry became almost "one house of prayer," his first and greatest success was upon the young; and he adds, "when God had touched their hearts with a love of goodness and delightful obedience to the truth, their parents and grandfathers, who had grown old in an ignorant, worldly state, did many of them fall into liking and love of piety; induced by the love of their children, whom they perceived to be made by it, much wiser, and better, and more dutiful to them." Perhaps God might thus bless your early attention to his gospel; and surely, if any thing could increase your future blessedness, it would

do so, to think that those you loved here, had, through your early religion, been led to turn from the way to hell, and to enter that to heaven. At any rate, seek God for your God; if you cannot persuade your friends to follow Jesus with you, yet follow him yourself. That is indeed an unhappy family, in which there is not one heir of heaven; in which all are going contentedly to destruction. Early conversion would surely be profitable to yourself; it would make all the blessings that have been mentioned as the Christian's portion, yours.

In addition to the blessings I have enumerated, it is the happiness of the real Christian, that all events in life are designed as blessings to him. All are meant in mercy, and all will end in glory. Even afflictions are blessings, blessings in disguise. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son that he receiveth. All things work together for good to them that love God. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It has been said, that on board a ship, in the midst of a violent storm, when the mariners were in distress and alarm, one little boy remained composed, and being asked the cause of his composure, answered, 'My Father is at the helm.' So may the Christian

say in every trial, 'My Father, my Almighty Father is at the helm; and he will steer me safe through every storm; or, when he pleases, say to the tempest, Peace, be still!'

Early piety prepares the soul for every possible event. By committing your all to the Lord Jesus Christ, you would make an early escape from all the dreadful danger to which you are exposed by sin; and would obtain an early title to glory, honour, and immortality. Possibly it may be the will of God, that you should live to threescore years or more below. An early knowledge of Christ would then secure to you that protection, and that guidance, which would make your life a life of piety and peace: happy would it be for you to live, for you would live to the Lord. But, perhaps, God designs only a few more months for you. If so, though it might be a happy thing for you to live, it would be a happier to die. Possessed of an interest in Christ, you would find the shortest life, the shortest path to heaven. Early death would be early blessedness. The world might lament your early, and in their view, untimely departure, while you were rejoicing, in having gained so speedy a triumph, in having reached,

—“With sails so swift, that peaceful shore,
Where tempests never beat, nor billows roar”

They who land there, before they have passed even the short span of twenty years in this world, will never wish to come back and pass another twenty here.

Let me relate to you a little history, illustrative of this, and one or two of the preceding sections. Some years back, in a village in Derbyshire, there lived a young and thoughtless girl. Her name was Mary. Like most around her she knew not God. Her days were chiefly employed in labour, and if a holiday came it was an opportunity for vanity and sinful pleasure. Soon after she had completed her thirteenth year, the season for the wake of a neighbouring village arrived; and she proposed to attend that scene of dissipation and folly. A young woman, who had herself chosen the better part, persuaded Mary to accompany her to hear a sermon. She went. The place of preaching was the cottage of a humble aged Christian. The preacher's subject was, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Mary listened; she felt the power of divine truth, in a way she had never done before; and left the house with feelings very different from those which she had on her entrance. The spirit of God applied the sermon to her heart and conscience. She could then see no pleasure in sin. She had done with the wake,

She felt herself deeply sinful, and corrupt; her mind was harrowed up with distress; and eternal salvation became the object of her desires. Now farewell to her former vanities and follies; she forsook them for ever; and from that evening began to live anew. She sought and at length found peace in believing; and in her seventeenth year was solemnly admitted into the church of Christ. Hers was consistent piety; she honoured the gospel, in her narrow sphere abroad, and was the comfort of her parents at home. A few months after her admission into the church of Christ, the symptoms of a consumption appeared, and God quickly called her to himself. In her days of languishing and weakness, the Lord was her supporter. She said that she found his promises sweeter and sweeter; that there are comforts and delights in his word which none know but those who enjoy them; and she never enjoyed so many blessings, as during the time of her affliction. Death had lost his threatening sting. She knew in whom she had believed, and professed a wish to depart: "I am not," said she, "afraid in the least of dying at any time." At different times she expressed her hope and peace; or called on the friends that surrounded her dying bed, to praise her God. At length she calmly entered into rest, before she had spent eigh-

teen years on earth. See, my young friend, how much the grace of God may do for them, who embrace religion in early life, even in a little time. On her thirteenth birth-day, Mary was a thoughtless girl; and ere her eighteenth arrived, a saint in light. Within the intervening span of something more than four short years, she was enabled to forsake the world; to find a Saviour; to profess his gospel; to honour that profession; to languish calmly through months of sickness; to conquer death; and doubtless land in heaven. In that little time she found her Lord; finished his will, and went to rest. How blessed was early piety to her! She might, when first awakened, have said, "I am not yet fourteen, surely hereafter will be soon enough for me;" and had she reasoned thus, and had she put off, though but for a few years, her inquiry for salvation, God it seems, by early death, would have put it off for ever. Delay not then to accept that blessing which is the source of every other; your life is as uncertain as was hers.

One inestimable advantage attending the blessings, which early religion would give you, is, that these shall never be taken away from their possessors. "Mary," said the Lord, "hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." As for the lovers of this world, their all is here, a

shortly their all will be for ever lost to them. Soon may it be said of the young, the vigorous, and the gay, who know not God, Where are they? Gone from the world they loved so well. Where their health, and youthful bloom? Gone, for ever gone. Where their gaiety and delights, their hours of thoughtless merriment, their frivolous amusements, their vain companions? all gone. There is not one earthly treasure, of which its possessors can affirm, that none shall separate them from it. Alas! poor creatures, ye gay, ye wealthy, ye lovers of pleasures, "what vain things are those that you embrace and cleave to! Whatsoever they be, soon must you part. Can you say of any of these, Who shall separate us? Nay, you may even live to see, and seek your parting, At last you must part, for you must die; then farewell to vanity, merriment, and pleasure; farewell, if you had even sat on thrones, to parks and palaces, gardens and honours, crowns and kingdoms, dearest friends, and nearest kindred, all must be parted with, and what have you besides?" If you, my young reader, are a lover of this world, what will you have left soon? But if a possessor of early religion, you may say, Not thus fleeting are my treasures. "Thou art my portion, O Lord," others have parks, palaces, and crowns; or wealth, gaiety, and

pleasure ; this is their portion ; but thou, the God of heaven and earth, art mine ; and mine for ever. When the miser shall have lost his wealth ; and crowns have fallen from the heads that wear them ; when the man of this world shall have left the world he idolized ; and all their delights shall have forsaken the young, the pleasure-taking, and the gay ; thou wilt still be mine ; thou wilt be my support, when rocks crumble into dust, and mountains tremble to their base ; and when the sun shall shine no more ; and when the earth itself shall have vanished like a falling star, that blazes and expires, thou wilt be mine still ; my God, “ and my portion for ever.”

And now, were it possible, to call from the dead, some that have died in youth, O what a confirmation would they give, to all that has been urged upon you here ! They who have followed Jesus, while young, might say to you, “ Follow him we followed. We soon embraced his gospel, yet not one hour too soon. Early as we began with religion, we began much too late ; and could we have felt grief in heaven, we should have grieved, that we did not sooner know, and love, and serve our Lord. Death cut us down in the morning of our days ; yet we did not die too soon ; for we had bowed betimes at the feet of Jesus, and had found eternal life in him.

He washed our sins away; he renewed our hearts; and prepared heaven for us, and us for heaven. He taught us to set our affections on things above. We saw others engaged with all their hearts, in the shadowy concerns of time; we pitied them and trod the path of life. We smiled in death. Divine grace made us conquerors over the grave; and now we rest from all our labours. Heaven is a long, long, happy home. Follow our Lord, and he will be your Lord. Receive him, and he will receive you. Commit your souls to him, and all will be well with you, for time and for eternity."

X.—THE PLEASANTNESS OF EARLY PIETY.

It is the common delusion of the world, that religion is a melancholy thing; unsuitable to the young, and destructive of their pleasures. The word of God, on the other hand, describes true religion as the only source of real comfort. That holy book declares that, "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace." It also tells us of "joy and peace in believing; of rejoicing in God; rejoicing in the Lord always; of rejoicing in Christ with joy unspeakable and full of glory; of

rejoicing in the Lord." The Scriptures represent it as the Christian's portion, to possess a peace which passeth all understanding; if sorrowful to be always rejoicing; to glory even in tribulation; and even if the fig-tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit in the vine; if the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; if the flocks should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stall; if, in short, famine and desolation were ravaging all around, still to rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.

If after this you wish for human testimonies, to the comforts which true piety affords, you may have them in abundance. How many would tell you, they never knew what true delight was, till they found it in religion. How many such would unite their testimony, with that of a young person, known to the writer, on the evening after her solemn admission into the church of Christ, "This has been a happy day to me; I hope I shall be faithful unto death, and then my last will be a happier."

True religion, though it forbids conformity to this world, and directs you to set your affections on things above, yet forbids no lawful use of the innocent comforts of earth and time. It is true, it denies you the play,

house, that hot-bed of vice, the licentious romance, the silly novel, and those scenes of worldly revelry, which a poor deceived world call happiness; yet these are not sources of real happiness even to those who love them so well. On one occasion, when some of Colonel Gardiner's dissolute companions were congratulating him on his happiness, in licentious dissipation, a dog happened to come into the room, and he could not forbear groaning inwardly, and saying to himself, "O that I were that dog!" Such was his happiness, and such is doubtless that of thousands more. Early piety would give you the best pleasures. Through the knowledge of Jesus you would have peace. Peace within. Conscience, that else must be a troublesome monitor, would become a delightful friend; while the Holy Spirit would witness with your spirit, that you were a child of God. Peace with God is another source of true delight, and this too would be yours; you might look on the Most High as a tender Father and beloved Friend, while to the careless sinner he is a dreadful foe.

Early piety would open to you another fountain of real pleasure, by forming your heart for the enjoyment of delights, far, far superior to those of sense. In communion with God, in meditation on divine promises, and love, the Christian has those pleasures,

which he would not exchange for all the pleasures of the world. Even his tears of penitential grief afford him more sincere delight, than they find in all their noisy mirth.

In various other respects the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness. Is it pleasing to think of dangers escaped? early religion would give you this satisfaction. You might, with wonder and delight, reflect that God had snatched you from perdition, and that though once an heir of wrath, the danger were over, and you an heir of heaven. Is it pleasant to think of treasures obtained and friends possessed? this pleasure would be yours. You might read the long catalogue of the Christian's blessings, and say of each, "This is mine. This promise is made to me." You might look upwards to the abodes of bliss, and exclaim, "There dwells the ever blessed Jehovah, and he is my God. There is the adored Immanuel, and he is my Saviour. Those bright abodes, which lie far beyond the reach of mortal sight, are my future home." In health and prosperity you might say, "God gives me much here, but how much more have I hereafter! how much better are my treasures there! Or in poverty, sickness, and pain, you might smile and say "My all is not laid here." Go and look in to an open grave, try to fancy it opened for you, and see whether you can imagine this

with peace and composure. If you cannot, learn that all your delights do not make you happy, for into the dreaded grave you must ere long descend ; but thousands possessed of the blessings of humble piety, have trodden that gloomy path with satisfaction, and desired to depart and be with Christ.

Is it pleasant to look forward to future scenes of happiness? This source of pleasure would become yours, if a possessor of early piety. Is it pleasant to have a friend ready to welcome us when a long journey is ended? Jesus is the young Christian's friend, he waits on the distant shore of heaven. In their passage through the river of death, he will uphold his humble friends, and welcome them to glory on their arrival there. O blissful prospect! Would not you possess it? and when you reach the close of life, do not you desire the pleasure of panting for the skies? the pleasure of being able to appeal to the Lord, that you have humbly loved him? Do you not wish to say at last, "Gracious Redeemer, on thee I rest my hopes, my best obedience has been too imperfect; my most faithful duties stained with too much imperfection; my love too cold; my thankfulness too weak; yet I expect eternal life, for it was purchased for me by thy blood. I look to heaven; it was secured for me by thy merits, thy sufferings, and thy death.

Gracious Lord, thine be the honour, while the infinite advantage is mine. It yields me pleasure now to know, that thou seest that I love thee, and have loved thee, from my early days. And though I have often offended thee, yet I bless thy name, that I have been kept from dishonouring thee by those numerous and dark crimes, which I should have committed, if I had not remembered thee betimes. Though I am an unprofitable servant, yet I know thou wilt not forget the little services of my youth, and those of my riper years ; but I look forward with joyful hope, to the time when I shall see thee as thou art ! my time is almost finished, yet I rejoice, in the sweet prospect, of passing eternity in thy presence, and there will I cast at thy feet, that crown which I have in expectation, and which was bought with thy blood."

True piety is pleasant, for it is a source of pleasure even in the midst of pain. No affliction can befall the true Christian, under which his redeemer will not give him suitable support and consolation. Some time back, a gentleman was invited to visit an indigent man, deeply afflicted ; and gave the following account of what he witnessed : "On entering the cottage, I found him alone. I was startled at the sight of a pale, emaciated man, a living image of death, fastened

upright in a chair, by a rude mechanism of cords and belts, hanging from the ceiling. He was totally unable to move either hand or foot, having more than four years been entirely deprived of the use of his limbs, yet the whole time suffering extreme anguish from swellings at all his joints. I asked, "Are you left alone, my friend, in this deplorable situation?" "No, Sir," replied he, in a touchingly feeble tone of mild resignation, "I am not alone, for God is with me." I asked him if he ever felt tempted to repine, under the pressure of so long continued and heavy a calamity? "Not for the last three years," said he, "blessed be God for it!" the eye of faith sparkling, and giving life to his pallid countenance, while he made the declaration; "for I have learned from this book in whom to believe: and though I am aware of my weakness and unworthiness, I am persuaded that he will not leave me, nor forsake me. And so it is, that when my lips are closed with locked jaw, and I cannot speak to the glory of God, he enables me to sing his praises in my heart."

My young friend, are not such hopes, such prospects as have been mentioned, sources of real pleasure? If you are a follower of the world, what is there in all your vain delights, that can bear any comparison with that holy peace, that pure delight, which flows from

the love of God, and a hope full of immortality? If you yourself perceive no charms in these pleasures, ask those who have tried them, what support and delight they yield, even in the last awful hours of life. Go to the sick-bed of the humble believer, and say, "Poor sufferer, can you find comfort in the midst of anguish?" "Yes," says one, "I have pain, but I have peace, I have peace."* "What, can you contemplate death itself, with comfort?" "Yes," replies another,† "I bless God, I can lie down with comfort at night, not being solicitous, whether I wake in this world or another." But they who made these declarations, had reached advanced life. Go then to the sick-bed of the dying youth; ask him, "Can you feel any pleasure, while sickness blasts all the joyous prospects which the young possess, and threatens you with an early tomb?" Let one youthful Christian‡ reply, who being dead, yet speaks: "O, that I could but let you know what I now feel! O, that I could show you what I see! O, that I could express the thousandth part of that sweetness that I now find in Christ! you would all then think it well worth while to make it your business to be

* Baxter.

† Watts.

‡ Janeway. See his Life, No. 10, Christian Biography.

religious. O, my dear friends, we little think what Christ is worth upon a death-bed. I would not for a world, nay, for millions of worlds, be now without Christ and a pardon. I would not for a world live any longer : the very thought of a possibility of recovery, makes me even tremble. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Death, do thy worst ! Death is nothing (through grace) to me. I can as easily die as shut my eyes, or turn my head and sleep : I long to be with Christ ; I long to die. Worldly pleasures are pitiful, poor, sorry things, compared with one glimpse of this glory, which shines so strongly into my soul ! O, why should any of you be so sad, when I am so glad ! This, this is the hour that I have waited for."

Ask the pious young woman, who, while others of her age are flaunting away in vanity and folly, lies on the bed of pain and suffering. Say to her, "Is religion pleasant in your esteem?" Yes, she might reply, "Yes, I am very happy, I would not change situation with any one living. Do not weep for me, I have no wish to live ; if I might have life by wishing for it, I should rather choose to die, and go to my Redeemer." "I long to go home." "I am truly happy, and if this be dying, it is a pleasant thing to die." "Not for all the world, not for a thousand worlds would I be restored to health." The

purport of these expressions was actually uttered by two young ladies, neither of whom completed her sixteenth year. O happy they who learn so soon, so well to die! and could you follow these to the triumphant family above, and see that glory, which no heart can conceive, then might a heavenly voice say to you, "Hither lead the despised and neglected, but pleasant paths, of early piety." My young friend, shall they lead you there? Can you be truly happy in any other way? Can you be happy too soon in this? Surely, you cannot too soon become acquainted with real pleasure. Seek it then at once. O seek it, in the love of your Redeemer, and the favour of your God.

**XI.—THE HAPPY CONCLUSION OF A RELIGIOUS
LIFE, A MOTIVE FOR EARLY PIETY.**

It is the peculiar excellence of religion, that its blessings yield most support, when that support is needed most. If you remember your Creator, in these your blooming days, he will remember this kindness of your youth, through all the scenes of your following life; and he will remember you for good, when you come to lie down and die. Death is approaching, and when all sublu

nary objects can yield you no support, God would remember, that in you, he had a child conflicting with the last foe ; and you might, with pleasure, think,

“Though unseen by human eye,
My Redeemer's hand is nigh ;
He has spread salvation's light
Far within the vale of night.”

O, my young friend, let me tell you, and tell you seriously, that you must die ; and unless you obtain the consolations of religion, must know their importance when too late. Think then that thus in your case, early piety might disarm death of its terrors. Thus might you also leave this world of vanity, assured of an interest in Jesus, and of everlasting rest. O, happy, happy they, who thus can die ! happy they who so peacefully depart in blooming youth, or withering age, from scenes of sorrow, or from scenes of comfort ! still happy they, who die blessed in an unseen Saviour's love and soon to be blessed by a present Saviour's gracious welcome to the abodes of glory ! Happy they, indeed, beyond all thought and expression ! beyond the power of mortal tongues to tell, or of narrow time to utter ! Let the vain world keep its possessions ! let the fashionable and the gay enjoy their short-lived gaiety, and quickly-ending plea-

sure ! let the wealthy exult in their stores, and the noble in their honours ! these are not the happy. The solemn death-bed, where the humble faithful disciple of Jesus has lain, has often afforded a happier spectacle, than the most happy ever beheld in scenes of worldly revelry and pleasure. Many followers of the world may be found professedly happy while sporting amidst the gaieties of this life, but where one so when leaving them for ever ? Many cheerful in the world, but where one so when going out of it ? They may be cheerful living, but the Christian can be so when dying too.

Perhaps you look on death as dreadful, but many as young as you, have met it without a fear, and without a wish to stay longer here, have passed through that important hour, to life, to happiness, to Jesus, heaven, and God. What causes the difference between them and you ? Is it not this, they knew in whom they had believed, and knowing this, knew also that heaven was their home ? O, my young friend, embrace that gospel, whose blessings formed their support ! Then, if life, that most uncertain of all uncertain things, should end long before you expect its conclusion, it will not end before you are found ready for a better.

On the 17th of April, 1808, died Mr. H

K

S. Golding, in the 24th year of his age. When he felt the approach of death, he is stated to have uttered these rapturous expressions: "I find now it is no delusion! My hopes are well founded! Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory I shall shortly partake of! Read your Bible! I shall read mine no more!—no more need it! Can this be dying? This body seems no longer to belong to the soul! it appears only as a curtain that covers it; and soon I shall drop this curtain, and be set at liberty! I rejoice to feel these bones give way, as it tells me, I shall shortly be with my God in glory."

The last words that he was heard to utter were, "Glory, glory, glory!"

You must die, yet if possessed of a humble assurance that Jesus is your Saviour, you may die in peace; and when that hour comes, which has been passed with comfort by thousands, who were safe in Jesus, and with terror by millions who were not, you, undismayed, may meet that solemn hour. Then, when languishing in your last sickness, you may wish for nothing less, and fear nothing more, than recovery and longer life. O when this scene of vanity is ending, when all your ornaments must be changed for a shroud, and all the amuse-

ments of youth, or the cares of riper years, for the solemnities of the eternal world, then indeed will early piety appear a blessing past expression. Then all that you are eager for now, will have vanished like a dream : the pleasures and the griefs, the cares and the hopes of youth, and life will be no more ; but the blessings of religion will not have fled away. Then when the last sands of life are running out, you may gladly say, These solemn painful days

“ Will waft me quickly o’er,
This life’s tempestuous sea ;
And bring me to the peaceful shore
Of blest eternity.”

And when you reach the very borders of that awful and amazing state, as with an angel’s eye, you might survey a vanishing world, and take your last adieu of earth and time. “ Farewell, ye scenes of imperfection ! Farewell, folly, sin, and vanity ! Farewell, all that once I knew ; the spots I trod, the places where I dwelt — the scenes endeared by friendly converse — the retreats made sacred by youthful devotion — all, farewell ! — I go where joy for ever reigns. I go where sickness never comes. I go where death is never known. I go where perfection and purity, happiness and endless life, shall be my long, long portion. I go from mortal to

immortal things ; from dying men to the living God ; from fickle mortals to the steadfast Saviour ; from sinful creatures to joyful saints and holy angels. Adieu, vain world of cares, and doubts, and fears ; yet sacred world, where heaven was made my portion ! Adieu, thou weary seat of troubles and imperfections ; yet endeared region, where the Saviour's love dawned upon my soul ; and glory, honour, and immortality became my inheritance ! Adieu for ever, departing world, adieu ! But O, welcome, ye blessed spirits, that come to convey me to my God ! Welcome, my Saviour's gracious call to his abode ! welcome, ye blissful scenes of peace and love, and joy, and praise ! Welcome, heaven ! Welcome, everlasting life !

At length your last conflict ends—your pulse stops—to beat no more for ever—your last hour comes—and goes—and you have done with the world for ever. Your tongue is silent ; your eyes are closed ; the silver cord is loosed ; and the golden bowl is broken ; surrounding friends look not on you, but on your lifeless clay. The soul is gone ; gone to other scenes ; to an unchanging eternal world. O, my young friend ! dark and dismal as this hour appears to the eye of sense, if you are found in Jesus, it will not be so to you ; but when your last painful struggle is over, in a happier world, will

your departed spirit find, that the blessed Jesus does not forget the kindness of your youth. Then will your triumphs begin. Others may hear your parting groan, your expiring sigh, while you triumphantly pass into your Redeemer's presence. O blessed change, when mortals weep because a friend is dead, but angels exult because a friend has entered real life ! Those who loved you may complain, " Alas, our beloved friend is dead to-day !" but could we hear the words of angels, we might hear it said, " Another heir of glory has now begun to live ; has left all sorrows for endless joys ; the sad chamber of sickness, for these blessed mansions of heaven ; weeping mortal friends, for Jesus and for God ; and now is this happy spirit with the Lord of glory, who, a few hours ago, was a prisoner in a feeble, diseased, and dying body."

How great the change ! What new scenes and prospects will that hour present ! what new joys inspire ! what new treasures unfold ! What raptures overwhelm the soul, just landed on that peaceful shore ! " Is this heaven ? " may the newly arrived pilgrim say ; " how grovelling were my highest thoughts to this ! Are these the spirits of the just ? these the holy angels of light ? these my companions for ever ? O how despicable was all I ever imagined compared

with this ! Are these they whose robes were washed in Jesus's blood ? Is this their abode for ever, and is this mine ? O had I conceived this below, how should I have sighed to leave that dark dungeon earth ! Is this my Saviour, and is this my God ? O transporting glory ! how mean, how worthless is the world I left ! yet there are millions grovelling in its dust, and but for heavenly grace, I might have done so too !” O blessed, inconceivably blessed, change, for the holy soul, that thus passes from the dismal chamber of sickness, to the bright and healthful regions of heaven ; from dying pains, to boundless bliss ; from the converse of sinful mortals, to the presence of the infinitely gracious and glorious God ; from a contentious, tumultuous world, to endless peace, and rest, and love !

O my youthful reader ; if all the other advantages of early piety were to vanish in a moment, surely these should be sufficient, to teach you to make humble religion your lasting, only choice. A few hasty years, at longest, must lay you in the dust ; but O think of such an entrance into glory, and of an eternal dwelling there ! Think of the joy with which, after a life of humble religion, your spirit would ascend into the presence of your Saviour ; even before your forsaken body was committed to the grave ; even be-

fore your lifeless limbs were stiffened with the cold of death! think of the congratulations of the holy saints, and martyrs, that fled to heaven before you, and of their warm welcome on your arrival there! think of the approving smile of your Redeemer and your God! that smile which would repay, in one hour, the labours of ten thousand years. Think of the delightful words, "Come, thou blessed!" Think of the joy with which you would behold the God you loved, and the Saviour you trusted? And O think of that great day, when the divine Redeemer, before an assembled world, would give you the crown of glory, that fadeth not away! Then you, a shining inhabitant of heaven, would see without concern, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon cease to shine; the stars fall from heaven, and the heavens vanish away; and when the last trumpet shall have proclaimed, that time shall be no more, you might rejoice, that though time had ended, eternity will never end; that though earthly pleasures proved a dream, heavenly delight will endure for ever and for ever; and O! you might add, "This eternity, this heaven is mine."

Happy will they be who reach that heavenly shore. Its glories cannot be described. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the

things which God hath prepared for them that love him. These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." How pleasing are these descriptions, yet the most remains untold! In that peaceful rest, no languor or weariness oppresses the active spirit; no disease or death shortens the endless life. There is no feeble infancy or withering age; no aching head, no painful limbs, no troubled heart. There no blasts of grief shall nip the joy; no clouds of distress darken the eternal day; but there are spotless purity; peace, that nothing can disturb; happiness, that nothing can alloy.

There the "righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father;" and there, "in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." There glorified saints and holy angels form one blessed family, in the presence of God and the Lamb. O happy day! when all who have followed Jesus here, shall dwell with Jesus there. O happy world! where all are happy. O my young friend, flee at once to that Saviour, who offers this heaven to you; then soon will the company of glorious spirits perfected in light, soon will the welcome voice of the Lord prove to you, that early piety is a blessed choice indeed.

One consideration more I would here press upon you: an early acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, not merely leads to all this blessedness, but all this, with that additional blessedness which the last judgment confers, will be eternal. Eternity is the brightest jewel in the triumphant believer's crown. Eternity makes heaven a heaven indeed. If the Christian's life here, instead of being crowned with numerous blessings, were but one scene of distress, yet with eternal life as his portion, how short would be the sorrow! how long, how lasting the joy! how hasty the pain! how endless the delight! how few the moments of grief and conflict! how many the

ages of triumph and bliss ! Earth you cannot have long, but heaven you may have for ever. Here you cannot long enjoy even the poor fading pleasures of time, but there you may possess a whole eternity of blessedness. What sweet words must "for ever and ever" be to those happy spirits, that have entered heavenly rest ! "This paradise for ever. This mansion of our God for ever. This blessed society for ever. This tranquil rest and calm repose, this peace and love for ever. This pure unbounded happiness, this world of bliss, and light, and joy for ever. Infinite ages shall roll away ; but not one sorrow will they know ; not one sigh will escape their hearts ; not one tear drop from their eyes ; not one joy will they lose ; not one passing cloud will obscure their day. Still will they enjoy the blessings of their Father's love, and of their Redeemer's favour in the highest perfection ; nor ever fear the loss of what they have ; and O ! it will be so great, that they will never wish for more. For ever and ever, is the measure of their bliss ; and O, what is the "for ever of heaven !"

None on earth can comprehend eternity. Were the house you inhabit to be filled with the finest sand, and then emptied so slowly, that but the smallest grain should be taken out once in ten thousand years, how many millions of ages would pass away before the

last grain were removed! yet, compared with eternity, these countless years would be like the twinkling of an eye. Were the mighty seas which divide so many nations, and dash their waves upon so many shores, to be suddenly changed into one mass of ink, and then to be employed in numbering down figures, and the least figure to signify a million of years, what countless ages would be numbered down, before the task were finished, before the seas were emptied! yet he who wrote the last figure might say, "These ages are not eternity. They are nothingness itself compared with that. Less than one drop to all the sea, less than one moment to all these infinite years, they are like a tale that is told, or a sigh that is forgotten." Had we lived through these inconceivably countless years, when we had seen them pass, and even pass a thousand times over, we might still say, "But a moment of eternity is past." Beyond ages that we might almost deem an eternity, other eternities would rise in endless succession. Such is the "for ever of heaven." Eternity is yours; and it is mine. In eternity we must live for ever and ever, the companions of angels or of devils.

Be wise for eternity. Devote your youth to God, and He will remember you in mercy for ever. He will be your God here, and your God in that bright world, millions of

years beyond the day, when sun, moon, and stars shall be blotted from the firmament, and measure time no longer. O then remember eternity. It is said, that a pious man once had this question put to him, "Why do you spend so much time in reading, meditation, and prayer?" He, in reply, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and solemnly said—"For ever! For ever! For ever!"

A PRAYER, IMPLORING A PARTICIPATION IN THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL.

Great and gracious God, in thy hand is the breath of every living thing, and the life of all mankind. From thee I have derived that existence, which thou hast determined to make as lasting as thine own. But though immortality must be my portion in the future world, yet I know, that in this, it is appointed unto all men once to die; and I am hastening to that hour, which will more than realize all my hopes, or all my fears. Behold me supplicating mercy at thy footstool; and in, and through thy Son, make me a partaker of that grace, which shall issue in everlasting glory.

How solemn, great God, is the prospect of appearing in thy presence! How shall I endure that awful, that amazing change, which will then take place in my condition?

How shall I meet thee? Wilt thou welcome me to thy presence, or bid me depart for ever? O, let this doubt be resolved before I die! Blessed, for ever blessed be thy name! that, in thy glorious gospel, thou hast shown how a sinner like me may become just before thee! and O, let the grace there displayed, prepare me for the solemnities of death and eternity! May I view life as a moment, and esteem it my chief concern in this world, to glorify thee, and reach everlasting rest. May the blessed Jesus blot out my sins, in his own blood; and thus prepare me to appear with comfort in thy sight. May my youth, my strength, my health, my heart, my soul, my life, my all, be henceforth consecrated to thee. Number me with thy children; and give to me the disposition of a child; with filial love, with patient submission, with holy delight, may I look up to thee; and may the language of my soul be, Abba Father. May I enjoy such assurance of acceptance in the Beloved, as will enable me to read "my title clear to mansions in the skies." May I know that he has "loved ME, and given himself for ME." Only bless me, O Lord, with this assurance, and death itself shall be welcome to me. Unite with me, in faith and hope, every friend I fondly love, and may they too go to Jesus bearing his reproach. And thus prepare us all to join

in those triumphant strains, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

At length, O most merciful Father, the solemn hour will come, and I must die. O, in that hour, when my flesh and heart fail, be thou the strength of my heart; may thy rod and thy staff comfort me! O, in that hour, when all the tenderness of sorrowing friends will avail me not, be thou more to me than all the world! Disperse, by thy presence, the gloom that shades the grave; and brighten that otherwise dark valley, with the sweet dawnings of immortal day. Cheer my departing spirit with the consolations of thy love; and may thine everlasting arms be my support. In the last hours of dissolving nature, enable me to testify the value of thy love, and may those, who witness my dying moments, see me favoured with such blessings, as shall make them feel, that early piety is real wisdom. Gladly may I take my farewell of earth; and leave friends and kindred without regret, assured of going to dearer, better friends above. Then may He, who suffered for me, be the foundation of all my hope; and leaning my languishing and dying head upon his compassionate arm, may I breathe my last, and sleep in Jesus.

And when, O Lord, I am numbered with

EARLY PIETY.

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the dead, when my last hour is finished, and all the joys or sorrows of life concluded for ever, O then may those ministering angels, who watch thy children's steps, become my convoy to the abodes of bliss! And may my joyful spirit, though bereft of the sweet converse of those it held most dear below, yet find, that it shall for ever hold, much sweeter converse with angelic friends. Then may "an abundant entrance be administered unto me, into the everlasting kingdom of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Then may he introduce me into thy presence; there, with all thy saints of ancient days, in glorious happiness, to wait the still fuller accomplishment of thy promises, when time itself shall finish. There, O my God, may I exult in thy presence, even while those I left behind attend this feeble body to its last long home. While they, with affectionate tears, commit "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," O, may I be rejoicing in having reached that land, where a sigh was never uttered, nor a tear ever shed. And, merciful Father, if friends or relatives should survive me, that know thee not, O, may my death be their life! and may they go from my grave, to prepare for their own!

And when the period for that state of intermediate glory, which thy word reveals, shall have past, then may my sleeping dust

arise to the resurrection of life; then, enraptured, may I view the Judge eternal, on his great white throne; with gladness may I hear the last trumpet sound, and the last thunders roll; with pleasure see the last lightnings play, and the stormy scenes of time conclude. And O, from the kind hand of Jesus, may even I receive that "crown of life, which fadeth not away; the crown, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give, at that day, to all that love his appearing."

Then, O my most gracious God, then, fixed in eternal rest, then, blessed with all the bliss of heaven, may I with all thy ransomed family unite in rendering thee praises, for those infinite wonders of redeeming love, for which eternity itself will never praise thee enough. Then may ' and millions more, unite in that sweet song, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.' Amen.

**XII. — NO REAL GOOD POSSESSED BY THOSE WHO
ARE DESTITUTE OF RELIGION; THEIR INGRATITUDE
TO GOD, AND CRUELTY TO THEMSELVES**

THOSE considerations, from which I have hitherto endeavoured to show the infinite importance of early piety, have been mostly of a pleasing kind; but if you be one on whom all these have been urged in vain, permit me to display the value of religion, by presenting to your view some of the dreadful evils, to which the want of it will expose you.

Religion is so truly the one important blessing, that it would in the end make up for the want of every thing, while all earthly blessings united can never supply its want. Were the whole world your own, it could not give you real peace in life; nor support you on the bed of death; nor obtain for you a place in heaven. If you possess friends, the most faithful, endeared, and affectionate, yet they cannot supply the want of His friendship, whose favour is better than life. They cannot drive sickness, pain, or death away; nor cheer your trembling soul, when going to meet an offended God; or when standing at his awful bar. Nor could their prayers, or tears, or agonies, arrest the dreadful sentence, "De-

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part from me, ye cursed." You must be born again, or never enter heaven. Without that divine change in your nature, God will still look upon you as an object of abhorrence ; and all that is most pleasing in human esteem will do no more to recommend you to him, than dressing a putrid corpse in fine apparel would do to recommend it in the sight of man. While destitute of religion, you, in the divine sight, are only a disgusting mass of corruption and iniquity ; nor can the bloom of health and youth, or the charms of beauty, hide from the eye of God, the loathsomeness of ruling sin. He is declared to "hate all workers of iniquity." Even to be satisfied with being almost a Christian, is still to continue destitute of all real good. In this way you would go to hell, as it were, by the gate of heaven.

The want of religion is a want which deprives you of a thousand benefits and comforts. While in this state, you live without true wisdom ; for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." You want the forgiveness of sins ; all your crimes are upon you ; and the least of them is heavy enough to sink you to hell. — You want composure of mind and inward peace. You may be asleep in sin, or may be indulging

dreams of future happiness; but the true peace of a humble and pious mind cannot be yours till you are Christ's. You want peace with God. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Till reconciled to him, God must be to you an awful Judge; and you a rebel, deserving his severe displeasure;—you want his fatherly care. In the hour of distress you have no God to go to, that you can justly call your friend and Father.—You want an interest in the love of Christ; it is a treasure in which you have no share; unhappy youth! to be without a Saviour's love. Wretched creature! to have no part in that treasure, compared with which the treasures of a thousand worlds would be as dross and dust. While you slight religion, you live without a part in any of the blessings he bestows. He is no Saviour of yours, though you may insult him with the title of Saviour. He is no Shepherd of yours, for you refuse to hear his voice and follow him, and are not one of his flock. If you call the blessings of his gospel, grace, and glory yours, you are deluding your own soul, for they will never belong to you, till you belong to him. It is to his sheep only that he gives eternal life; but "you will not come to him that you may have life." Calling him Lord, Lord, will avail you not, for he has solemnly declared, "Not every one that

saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

Bright indeed are the hopes of those, who are truly the young disciples of the Lord; but none of these hopes are yours. For you no glorious mansions are prepared; no Saviour smiles; no heaven blooms; no immortal day shines for you. No crown of life awaits you; and none are ready to welcome your entrance on eternity, but those infernal beings, who, with hellish joy, may exclaim, "Art thou become like unto us?"

You want also those blessings that should comfort you in death. All the false supports, and deluding pleasures of the world, will then be vanity of vanities; and what have you besides?—You want a title to the bliss of heaven.—Heaven is no home of yours, it is not a rest to which you have any claim. Unhappy young man, or young woman! this is too surely your sad condition. O wretched creature! how poor are you, in the midst of all you may possess! how truly miserable in the midst of all your gaieties and pleasures! Poor trifler, you have not one cheering promise in the book of God. If you turn to God, you will have many, but now you have not one. Not one promise that you shall be kept out of hell, even for one month; but many awful threats, that

if you die as you are, you shall be turned into that flaming prison. Poor indeed are you, all you have will leave you soon. Your hasty pleasures will soon depart, and you must lie down in the dust of death; while a dreadful and neglected eternity will appear before your trembling soul.

Another evil attending the want of religion is, that it is a want which spoils all other blessings. If you live without religion, life will be no blessing to you. For you in vain the Saviour died. His gospel is to you the "savour of death unto death." The sun shines on you in vain, for it shines to light you to destruction. The years roll on in vain, for every added year increases your load of guilt. Health blesses you in vain, for your soul is sickening to eternal death. Harsh as it may sound, it would really have been better for you, to have been cut off in your sins, years ago, and then to have been sent to hell, than to live here adding to the number of your sins, and then to sink to endless wretchedness. Yes, unhappy youth, if you continue careless of religion, every added year will prove a curse instead of a blessing. The longer you live in this world, the deeper will be your misery in the next. The more mercies you enjoy, the more guilt you contract. The more blessings you receive from God, the baser are your ingratitude and

sin in refusing to give him your youth. A dying profligate once said, "I have been too strong for Omnipotence. I have plucked down ruin." Thus, by carelessness and neglect, you change God's blessings into curses. O, what would you think of a sick man, who, by some fatal power, should change all the remedies, by which a kind physician would restore his health, into a subtle poison; which should spread through his body, occasion him years of misery, and in the end, torture him to death! Distracted wretch! you might exclaim, all are kind to him but himself; how happy might he be, if he felt half the pity for himself, that others feel for him! Do you slight your God? You act this part; nay, a far worse than this; you change his blessings into curses. You heap up wrath against the day of wrath. By the very mercies of God, you are preparing matter for your own torment; not merely through a few fleeting years, but through a dreadful eternity. Distracted youth! did you feel half that pity for your own soul, that others feel for you, how happy would you become! How many are kind to you! how cruel are you to yourself!

While you continue careless of religion, you lead a life of base ingratitude to the God that gave you being. Ingratitude is indescribably base, when manifested to a friend

or parent, in this world; but baser still is unkindness and ingratitude to God. Do you remember a fable, which, perhaps, you may have read in your childhood? A compassionate countryman found a serpent, chilled with frost; he pitied it; he put it in his bosom; he cherished it with tenderness there. The vital warmth restored it to life and activity; but what was its first action? It would fain have destroyed its benefactor. Apply this fable to the present subject. Has not God done more for you, than words can express? Are not you indebted to him for life, breath, being, and all things? Through his fostering care, you have reached the vigour and bloom of youth; and what are your first actions? what is the commencement of your course? Neglect of God and religion; and, thus, base ingratitude and sin. O, is not this imitating the serpent? It is true, your abused Benefactor is beyond the reach of real injury; but your ingratitude is the same, as if he could receive the greatest injury from you. You deny him your youth, your favoured youth. The time in which you are most favoured by God, the blooming season, which he values most, that very time, that very bloom, you give to Satan, the world, and sin. O! while you act this part, little as you may suspect it, the venom of the old serpent is rankling in your heart.

Perhaps you delude yourself by imagining, that you shall present him the latter part of life, but does not his goodness claim all your days? Besides, what can the aged convert offer? "His riches? but he can use them no more: his pleasures? but he can enjoy them no longer. He leaves his sins, when they will no longer bear him company."

In neglecting early piety, you are ungrateful to the Son of God. He humbled himself to earth, he hungered and thirsted, groaned and wept, endured the thorns, the scourge, the cross, and even bled and died, in pity to your soul; and he demands no return, but what is for your good as well as his glory. He demands your heart; and you refuse to give it. Were not they basely cruel and ungrateful to him, who cried, "Not this man, but Barabbas;" who thus preferred a murderer to the Lord of life? but you act as guilty a part, while you prefer the world, that delusive destroyer, to a dying Saviour, and a gracious God! Rather, you do worse than the murderers of the Lord of glory did. Many of them knew not what they did. You are more ungrateful and unkind to Christ than they; while you profess to view him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; and yet in reality, prefer to him, not Barabbas, but sin and Satan. Perhaps you say, "Surely I do not act this horrid part;" but

O! deceive not your own heart, for in God's esteem, you do, while you refuse to yield your youth to Christ. Though you may merely neglect his grace, yet, according to the Scriptures, grace neglected, is grace refused; and though you may be merely careless of the Lord Jesus, a Saviour slighted, is a Saviour rejected; and O, dreadful! rejected for what? for vanity, folly, and pleasure; or, in plainer words, for the service of the world, and the devil. And O! rejected by whom? By one to whom Christ has an everlasting right. Yes, he has such a right to you, though you may refuse to acknowledge his claim; and, in denying your heart to him, you are not merely guilty of the most base ingratitude, but of the vilest injustice. You rob him of his right. Love so amazing, so divine as his, demands 'your life, your soul, your all;' and shall it have no grateful return? When you owe God every thing, will you be so base as to give him nothing?

In refusing your youth to God, you are guilty of the greatest cruelty to yourself. Better far had it been for you never to have been born, than to come into the world, to spend a few sinful years, and then to go and make your sad abode with devils and the damned; where the worm never dieth, and the fire never shall be quenched. You would think any one dreadfully cruel to himself,

who might cut and mangle his own body, who might tear off his own flesh, who might thrust his own limbs into the fire, and keep them there, in misery, till they were consumed. But which is worst, to mangle a *mortal* body, or ruin an *immortal* soul? to thrust a limb into the fire, or to throw the soul into hell? If you beheld one, that by a fall from his horse, or from a house roof, had his limbs broken, and lay writhing in agony on the ground, would you not declare him cruel to himself, if a friend stood by, ready and able to cure him, and he were to refuse the needful help? But which is worst, to linger on to death in agony, through slighting a surgeon's aid; or to continue a few years, a depraved, condemned, and ruined creature, and then to sink to endless and hopeless wretchedness, through neglecting a divine Saviour's help? You would not be so cruel to yourself, as to thrust a foot, or a hand, or even the point of a finger into the fire; O, do not be so cruel to your own soul, as to undo it with a sure and everlasting destruction! Every moment that you delay to turn to God, is a moment of cruelty to your soul, your own, your immortal soul. Oh, miserable folly! to set no value now on those things, for which you would ere long think the wealth of worlds a trifling price. On this side the grave, to let eternal salvation

be almost the only thing you neglect, while, on the other, it will be the only thing that is worthy of your desire.

In neglecting early piety, you are unkind to all that wish you well. To that blessed Spirit who strives with you; to those holy angels, who would fain rejoice over you; to those ministers of the gospel, that labour and pray for your conversion; to those friends, if you have such, who are the friends of Christ, and who wish to see you such also. How much comfort you deny them! What pleasure your conversion might give them! but you refuse them this pleasure. While thus basely ungrateful to your God, to the Lord Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit; while thus cruel to yourself; while thus unkind to angels, to ministers, to Christian friends; whom, O young sinner, do you please? only those malignant spirits, who watch for your destruction, and seek your ruin: only the devil and his angels. They look on you as their own. O could you see that hateful foe, would you then act this wicked part? yet, if you do not prepare to meet your God, remember you will soon be given up, by him, into the hands of Satan.

XIII.—THE VANITY OF YOUTH, AND THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE, REASONS FOR THE IMMEDIATE CHOICE OF EARLY PIETY.

CONSIDER what others were a few seasons ago, that are now fixed in the eternal world. They were as young, and perhaps, alas! as thoughtless and as gay as you. When you pass through a burying-ground look at its graves; read the inscriptions there; and see how many in the bloom of life, have been cut off and called to meet their God. There lie the young, the healthy, and the strong. There lie many whom the world once charmed, and who for it slighted their immortal souls. And what is the world to them now? Perhaps before twelve months more depart, your now youthful and healthful body may be like theirs; your active limbs may be mouldering into dust; your eyes closed upon the world; and all its pains and its pleasures will neither pain nor please you in the grave. Where are they now, and where must you shortly be? They, a few years back, were as gay as you can be, but O! all earthly things are for ever past with them. You are young now, so were they then; but youth and vigour have forsaken them. You are healthy now, so then were they; though since numbered with the dead. The world then seemed as enchanting to

them, as it can do to you ; they were as eager as you for its delights, and as much set upon its dying pleasures ; but they are gone ; and O what is it to their poor breathless dust ? What will it soon be to yours ? They are mouldered back to dust. Their very coffins are decayed. Their business is done. Their gaiety is over. Their joys are past. They are gone into the world of spirits. Prepared or unprepared, they have met their God. O what new scenes have opened upon them ! With what terror have they, who refused God's grace in this world, been dragged, by hellish fiends, to everlasting burnings ! Could some of these unhappy creatures now address you, did not the malignity of their nature prevent them, they might say, " Avoid our folly. Shun our misery. Sin and the world have ruined us ; heart-rending thought ! ruined us for ever ! A little while back, pleasure, health, and youth were ours ! Then we were as eager in the pursuit of fancied happiness, as you can possibly be. The world appeared dressed in as gay colours to us, as it now does to you. We trusted in our youth, and looked on future years as our own, which, alas ! we never lived to see. Vanity and pride filled our hearts ; pleasure was our idol ; and the world our delight. Alas ! we lived as if it were our home, and forgot that we

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were but travellers through it, to eternal scenes. We quenched the warnings of conscience; we scorned the admonitions of pious friends; and thought those strangely impermanent, that reminded us of death and the grave, though, alas! we were so near to both. We deemed religion a melancholy thing; and scorned those blessings, for which we should now think a thousand worlds a little price. We ridiculed the folly of professing to be strangers and pilgrims upon earth; and looked down with contemptuous pity on those, whose chief concern on earth was safely to reach heaven. We thought our folly wisdom, and their true wisdom folly. We heard the tolling bell, but forgot that it would soon toll for us. We saw the opened grave, unmindful that that land of silence would quickly be our long home. Trifling as you, we stopped not to consider what we were, and what we soon must be. But youth failed us; death arrived, and the lying vanities of life fled at its touch. Then we discovered our misery. Then we saw our want; but alas! too late. Woe is us! Our day of grace is gone. The tidings of mercy are now unheard by us. The blood of Jesus can never cleanse us; nor the compassion of God reach us now. For the vain pleasures of a moment, we have ruined a whole eternity."

O my young friend ! would the tale of horror, that such unhappy creatures, if permitted, could relate, make you feel how vain is youth ? Remember I beseech you, that it is as vain, as if you could hear their doleful lamentations. Millions of the young die every year. How easily may a fever seize upon you, and in a few days reduce you from the highest health to feebleness and death ! how quickly may any sudden change from heat to cold, or many other causes, inflame your lungs, or some other vital part, and, in a few days, lodge you—where ? In the eternal world. How soon may a cold turn to a consumption, and before you think yourself seriously ill, you may be incurably so ! How soon may numerous other diseases, at God's bidding, accomplish their awful errand.

O my young friend, while you are a dying creature, would you lead a life most basely wicked, by refusing to yield your youth to Christ ? Would you have, at last, to lament, that you have rushed headlong into hell, in spite of all that was done, to turn your feet in the way to heaven ? Prevent such sad reflections, I beseech you. As ever you would find mercy at the bar of God, fly to the God of mercy now. Seek Jesus in these the fair days of your youth. I know with many young persons it is now an easy

thing to slight the friendly warning, that bids them follow the Saviour, and to avoid, or deride the friend that gives it; but it will be dreadfully hard at last, to remember slighted warnings — abused privileges — a gracious God forsaken — a kind Saviour neglected — a wasted youth — a heaven lost — a hell incurred — and a devil pleased instead of God. One way remains for you to escape all these evils; it is to go to Christ for life. May God lead you to him!

XIV.—THE SORROWS AND DANGERS THAT ATTEND THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS NOTICED, AS A REASON FOR THE CHOICE OF EARLY RELIGION.

WHILE the various blessings, which attend a knowledge of the gospel, combine to form a motive for embracing early piety, a motive of an opposite nature, but of a most weighty kind, arises from the disappointments, and sorrows, and miseries, that attend the path of transgressors. If you, my youthful reader, are still careless of salvation, allow me now to entreat you to yield yourself to Christ, not by showing you the charms of religion, but by convincing you, "that the way of transgressors is hard."

This is the testimony of the word of God, which also assures you, that "there is no peace to the wicked;" and that God, to them, "distributeth sorrows in his anger"

Depravity and corruption have led you into the ways of sin, and blindness keeps you contented there. "The god of this world (or Satan) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." While in this state, you resemble a blind man in the midst of treacherous enemies; he is unconscious of their being round him; and so he does not fear them. Thus, on the edge of destruction, you are unconcerned, because blind to your state; for did you see your real state while uninterested in the Saviour, you might perceive yourself to be, as it were, hanging by a single thread over the mouth of hell; devils waiting to receive you; the eternal Judge frowning upon you! and nothing wanting to seal you up under endless despair, but the command of God to snap the brittle thread of life asunder. You are blinded by Satan, and led captive at his will. Is not this a state of wretchedness? yet this is yours; though spiritual blindness prevents your perception of it.

But perhaps, though such is your truly

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dismal condition, you have not felt its danger, nor been alarmed at its horrors. You have thought, and still think, the ways of iniquity pleasing. Yes, unhappy youth, while the future is forgotten, and death and judgment out of sight, the young sinner may find in them a transitory though brutish pleasure. The profligate, the drunken, and the lewd may be gratified, for a few moments, with their base delights. The triflers in the giddy ball-room, or licentious theatre, or when wasting invaluable time over a novel or romance, may think themselves happy; but these are unsatisfying things. The sinner pursues them for happiness! and yet is not happy. Have you never known this? Have you never seemed happy, in the view of others, when full of inward misery? In the vain round of pleasures and amusements, when intoxicated with worldly delights, conscience, like a still small voice within, often tells the sinner, that the end of these things is death. Has not this sacred monitor thus at times followed you, and made you uneasy even in spite of yourself? has it not even at the playhouse, the card table, or the dance, told you that death, judgment, and hell, were at hand? The careless sinner, who seems so cheerful, who laughs so loud, who appears so merry through these inward stings, often feels, in the midst of all his delight, a load of

remorse and wretchedness. Not merely does sin bring destruction in the next world, but its fruits are commonly wretchedness and ruin in this life.

Sabbath-breaking has been mentioned as one of the most ~~common~~ sins of youth, and how sad are its fruits ! it often takes the lead in a legion of crimes. The sabbath-breaker is not long merely a sabbath-breaker. The writer of these pages once attended a criminal, who suffered death for murder, and he spoke of sabbath-breaking as a sin that led him to others ! and perhaps few criminals have reached the gallows, who had not to ascribe their destruction in a great measure to this crime. Many have expressly mentioned this as the source of their guilt and misery. Not long ago five men suffered on the gallows, at the same time, in the Isle of Ely, one or two of whom had been in a decent situation, and who all bore this sad testimony to the effects of sabbath-breaking "We most sincerely warn you all to avoid those sins, which have been the means of bringing us here. By all means, avoid irreligion and vice of all kinds ; particularly swearing, drunkenness, and sabbath-breaking." One of them declared, that drunkenness, whoredom, and sabbath-breaking, had brought them all to their untimely end. The awful judgments of God on sabbath-breakers

have also proved their way to be a way of sorrows. Many have gone out in the morning, on sabbath-breaking parties of pleasure, who, ere the evening came, were cut off by a sudden and unexpected doom ; and sent all unprepared into the eternal world. Not long back, two parties, containing eleven or twelve persons, perished during one sabbath-day, in the river Thames. Could some of these unhappy creatures now address you, they might say, "Forsake your destructive pleasures ; cease your sabbath-breaking parties, lest our doom be shortly yours. Alas ! our broken sabbaths are our misery now. Your sabbaths are not all gone, but ours are, and we would give the world to have spent them in the ways of God. Alas ! we profaned them ; and God was angry with us, and snatched us from the world where mercy may be found, and fixed us in that sad abode where no sabbath ever shines."

Drunkenness leads to temporal and eternal destruction ! it entails disease on the body ; beggary on the estate ; and damnation on the soul.

The guilty indulgence of loose and wanton desires, though so awfully prevalent, entails on multitudes of young transgressors, years of misery and early death. "For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb, and her mouth is smoother than oil ;

but her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Picture to yourself a young man, the slave of this destructive sin. He might have enjoyed health and vigour; have been a comfort to others, and a blessing to himself; but his crimes have ruined his health; disease sends him to an early tomb; and his murdered soul goes hence, laden with the guilt of that crime, of which the Most High has solemnly said, "They that do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. For this ye know; that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God."

Does a young woman give way to the seducer, alas! she finds the way of transgressors hard indeed. Reproaches of conscience; loss of character, with the other bitter fruits of this crime, become her sad portion. Perhaps she goes onward in sin, and ends in confirmed habits of vice; then has she peace? Ah, no! she is become in reality, the obscuring of all things. How different is such a one from what she might have been! and from what others are, who have made God the guide of their youth. They, the ornaments and comforts of the families to which they belong; but she, "an abandoned prostitute! lost to all sense of shame, and to every right feeling! she lives only to

spread disease, and wickedness, and misery, and death, and damnation, to all who come within the reach of her pestilential breath !”

Connected with these crimes, dishonesty often takes its dreadful place. But bitter are the fruits of this disgraceful sin ! bitter for time, as well as eternity. Fear of detection, distrust, discredit, and in the end, the prison, transportation, or the gallows, are the frequent termination of those dishonest courses, to which profligacy and lewdness lead.

O could those, who have tried to the utmost what delights transgression yields, address you, they would assure you, that the ways of irreligion are full of sorrow. Behold in your imagination, the sabbath-breaker, then went out on a party of pleasure, brought home, as hundreds have been, a ghastly corpse. See the drunken and the lewd, wallowing for a few short years in the mire of sensuality ; then view them diseased and undone ; then follow them a little further, see the close of all ; view them expiring, filled with consternation and horror, perhaps blaspheming God and dying ; dying miserably as that wretched atheist, who when told that nothing more could be done for him, that he must die, clenched his fists, gnashed his teeth, and said with the utmost fury, “ God, God, I won’t die !” and immediately expired. See this, and then

say, are these the ways of pleasantness? Is this the path of peace? No, not unless damnation is pleasant, and hell the abode of peace. All who have tried the paths of sin have found them hard. O, could fallen angels speak to you, would even devils declare a painful truth, they could assure you of this. When was it that they knew happiness? It was before they sinned.

Neglect of religion is an inexpressibly dangerous evil. Perhaps you look with horror on some of the sins already mentioned, yet allow me to assure you, you cannot, while you live without God, say, Thus far will I go in sin, and no further. Few are hardened in iniquity, and sealed for perdition at once. The way of sin is a progressive way. Little did David, when he first turned his eyes on Bathsheba, suppose that he should soon plunge deep in base adultery, and atrocious murder. Little did Peter think, when he first boasted, that he should deny his Lord, and then be guilty of falsehood, perjury, and profaneness. Little did the youth, who dies the victim of youthful lusts, imagine, that the first wanton thought he indulged was the forerunner of all his guilt and misery. Little did the thoughtless girl, who ends her life a prostitute, think, that when indulging a vain pride in dress and show, she was paving the way for all her future

guilt and wretchedness; but "the way of the wicked seduceth them."

Perhaps you are clear of all these open crimes; perhaps you may continue so; you may be amiable and moral, but still you are a sinner; and it is inexpressibly dreadful to delay turning to God, in whom you live, and move. Little did thousands, once like you, imagine where the ways of irreligion end. It is dangerous to trifle with a God. The Spirit has begun to strive with you, but you know not how soon he may have done. You may quench grace, but cannot kindle it.

"A death-bed," it is truly said, "is a detector of the heart;" it proves that the ways of sin are ways of sorrow. What are worldly pleasures then? what comfort can they give? It is said that Mr. Hervey was once travelling with a lady, who expatiated largely on the pleasures of the playhouse. She mentioned the pleasure of thinking beforehand of the play, the pleasure of seeing it, and the pleasure of recollecting it afterwards. Mr. Hervey mildly observed to her, that there was one pleasure which she had not mentioned. She inquired what that was; and he told her, the pleasure of recollecting it upon her death-bed. She felt the remark, and is said to have sought better pleasures. The miseries that await those

who are strangers to humble piety, have been awfully displayed, in the dying hours of multitudes, who had slighted that one thing needful.

One lover of pleasure, in his dying hours, exclaimed, "O, time! time! it is fit thou shouldst thus strike thy murderer to the heart.—How art thou fled for ever!—A month! O for a single week! I ask not for years; though an age were too little for the much I have to do.

"Remorse for the past throws my thoughts on the future. Worse dread of the future strikes them back on the past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldst struggle with the martyr for his stake, and bless heaven for the flames—that is not an everlasting flame; that is not an unquenchable fire." He afterwards exclaimed, "O! thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent, Lord God! hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown."

Of the honourable Francis Newport, it is stated, that at one time, looking towards a fire, he said, "Oh! that I were to lie and broil upon that fire for a hundred thousand years, to purchase the favour of God, and be reconciled to him again! But it is a fruitless vain wish: millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer the end of my tortures,

than one poor hour. O eternity! eternity! Oh! the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation!"

Another person, who was a gay and thoughtless lover of the world, uttered the following, among other expressions, in his dying hours.

"O! that I had been wise, that I had known this, that I had considered my latter end. Death is knocking at my doors; in a few hours more I shall draw my last gasp; and then judgment, the tremendous judgment! how shall I appear, unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing and omnipotent God? Heretofore, woe is me! when God called, I refused; when he invited, I was one of them that made excuse. Now, therefore, I receive the reward of my deeds: fearfulness and trembling are come upon me; I smart, and am in sore anguish already; and yet this is but the beginning of sorrows! It doth not yet appear what I shall be; but surely I shall be ruined, undone, and destroyed, with an everlasting destruction!"

A young woman, who had lived negligent of the great salvation, not long before she died, burst into tears, and said, "Oh that I had repented, when the Spirit of God was striving with me! but now I am undone." She afterwards exclaimed, "Oh how have I been deceived! When I was in health, I

delayed repentance from time to time! O that I had my time to live over again! O that I had obeyed the gospel! but now I must burn in hell for ever. Oh! I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it." Not long before she died, she said, "Eternity, Eternity. Oh to burn throughout eternity!"

Perhaps you think such cases, though dreadful, not frequent; but it is to be feared, they are by no means rare. Within a few days, several awful instances of the danger and misery of an irreligious state, have been mentioned to the writer. One unhappy creature, in his dying hours, among a number of dismal expressions, used such as the following. "Oh that hell! Why must I leave this earth? Oh that hell!"

A young woman, who had occasionally attended the writer's ministry, though, alas! in vain, was laid upon the bed of death. In that solemn situation, her lamentations and bitter grief were most affecting. She confessed that she had neglected the great salvation. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "Oh my hard heart; I find no softness in it. It will not relent. Is there no forgiveness for me? Am I not to be saved, Lord?" Her most frequent cry was, "Lord, break my hard heart!" In a few hours after this she died.

Another young woman, who had also attended the writer's ministry, but who con-

tinued a careless, worldly girl, was hurried, by a sudden disease, into the eternal world. It was stated that not many hours before her death she warned one of her relatives, not to walk in the ways in which she had walked; declaring that they led to hell, and that she was going thither.

Is such the conclusion of a life of sin? are such the consequences of making light of Christ? O then, as you would avoid the awful end of transgressors, forsake their destructive path! Alas! what madness is it to choose damnation, if you may but go, what is to corrupt nature, a pleasant way to hell.

Listen not to the voice of seducers who would lead you to ruin. Their artifices to lead you into sin, or to keep you in your present state, are stratagems of Satan to engulf you in eternal misery. When the insidious but smiling seducer would tempt you astray, think with yourself, "Can I bear my Creator's anger? Can I endure my Judge's frown? Can I dwell with everlasting burnings? Shall I neglect eternal life, and choose eternal death for things that perish in the using?"

XV. — THE TERRORS, AND FEARFUL CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH AND JUDGMENT, TO THE UNCONVERTED, A REASON FOR EARLY PIETY.

HAS what I have already urged on your attention produced, under God, the desired effect? or has all been urged in vain? if it have, let me, before I leave you for ever, entreat you to consider those awful scenes, to which you are hastening so fast.

Should you love the world ever so well, should you enjoy it ever so much, and even live in it through the longest term allowed to man, yet short is the longest, and when past a nothing. You must die. How thoughtless soever you may be of death and eternity, they are nearer to you every hour, and you even you, must die. If you continue to live without God, you must die without him. Imagine yourself leaving the world in that awful state. You must leave it thus, unless you repent and remember your Creator. Imagine your last day arrived. This scene of vanity is ending. The world you loved is leaving you for ever. Behind you is a wasted and sin-spent life. Before you is the grave, judgment, and eternity. Your day of grace is finished. Your soul, loaded with innumerable sins, is going to meet that God, to whom all your secret guilt has been revealed. Where can you look for refuge?

Man cannot help you, and you have every reason to believe, that God will not. Now sins forgotten come to mind again. Now guilty pleasures stare you in the face ; but all their charms are gone. Now fears and terrors crowd upon your soul ; and devils seem to beckon you away. All is darkness and misery before ; all guilt and folly behind. Oh fearful state ! Oh fearful end of an ungodly life ! No friend can go with you ; you must die alone, and go alone to meet your God. All else is forsaking you ; and he, who would never have forsaken you ; he who would have been your friend for ever, even he will refuse to receive you. The hour, the dreadful hour arrives. Your last moment comes, you die ! and ah ! the agonies of death are succeeded by the fiercer torments of damnation and despair. No kind angels welcome your departing spirit. No gentle messengers appear, to convey it to eternal rest. O doleful state ! Your sweet season of mercy is gone ; and in vain you wish for mercy and for time again. Weeping friends commit your body to the grave ; friends, who little imagine where the wretched soul is fixed. There must the body lie, till it rise to the resurrection of damnation.

Oh how dreadful a change is this ! Oh when they who trifle with salvation have breathed their last, how may they shrink

back from the scene which opens before them ! how may their terrified souls wish to creep into their dead bodies again ! but wish in vain. O what terrible dismay must seize upon them, when the sight of the majesty and glory of that God, whose threatenings and invitations they equally disregarded, bursts upon them ! and no place is found to hide their souls ; no way to escape the terrifying sight. Oh miserable immortals ! how terrible are their feelings, while they stand trembling and despairing, before the great and dreadful God ; and see him who is love itself to his children, denouncing nothing but vengeance and terror on them ! O could they shrink back for one year more to life ! What worlds, if they had them, would they give to gain this boon ! O could they have but one month's mercy more ! or could they die a second time and never live again . O how distressing, beyond the impassable gulf, to see the blessed heaven, but themselves shut out ! to see those glorious and happy saints and angels, that might have been their companions for ever, but now not one friend among them ! And Oh ! though heaven is shut against them, hell is open to receive them ; that is the region, which they must take instead of heaven, that wretched abode of everlasting fire, and ever-tormenting fiends. O dreadful hour, when they enter

that flaming prison ! yet there they must await eternal judgment.

Ah, my young friend, remember that the hour, the now forgotten, but, if you live in your sins, the terrible hour of eternal judgment, will arrive. You may forget it now, but will be unable to forget it then. You even you, must hear the archangel's trumpet. You must behold the descending Judge, and the burning world. Willing or unwilling, ready or unready, there you must appear. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Then you must account for the deeds done in the body. Then your actions must be tried ; your words examined : then the black aggravations of your crimes will fully appear. O sinner ! then it will be known, how you strike through the checks of conscience and the restraints of religion ; how you were warned of your danger, and exhorted to repent, but still obstinately refused, and went forward to destruction. Or if your heart has at times been seriously impressed, and yet in vain, it will then be seen, as one of the

aggravations of your sins, that you felt the power of divine truth, and yet went on to sin again. The sermons of ministers, the admonitions of friends, and the warnings of the Bible, will all be remembered in judgment, and produced, to show how much greater is your guilt, than theirs, who lived in heathen lands, and heard not the sound of salvation. Then too it will be known what poor trifles, what base delights, you preferred to the love of God and the joys of heaven. O think not to escape! God will bring thee into judgment. Though thou shouldst be hardened in life, and even deluded in death, yet when thou hast had thy day of sin, God will have his day of vengeance; and when thou hast had the pleasure, thou must have the pain. Think not that you have done with the sinful pleasures and follies of past years. You have not done with them yet: the delight is gone, but the sad account remains behind. You perhaps call your youthful sins frolics, or innocent sports, or foibles at the worst, but if you are thus deceived, God is not. Your slights of religion;—your neglect of his service, and his ways;—your broken sabbaths; your wasted days;—your pride; your vanity; must all be answered for on that tremendous day.

Know, O young man, if you are a follow

er of the world, you must then receive the reward of all your sinful actions ; your riotings and revellings, your drunkenness and debaucheries, your hardening others in sin, your wanton songs, your profane words, shall all come to light and insure your damnation. Though you may be a wanton profligate, or even a scoffing infidel, yet God will bring you into judgment ; and, infidel as you may be, will make you tremble before that bar which is the object of your contempt and ridicule now. Or if you are all that is moral or amiable in the sight of men, yet if destitute of saving grace, God will see in you ten thousand unforgiven sins, for which he will condemn you then. Know, O young woman, that God will then bring you also into judgment. Your sabbaths wasted in indolence or trifling merriment ; your time squandered on poisonous novels ; — your heart wrapped up in dress and gaiety, while God and religion are shut out of it ; — your glass consulted, while the Redeemer is neglected ; — your fondness for worldly delights ; — your forgetfulness of your poor immortal soul ; — all these sins, and many more, are crying to heaven against you, and not one, in that awful day, will be forgotten. Vain will be the pleas and excuses, that now deceive yourself and others. The Judge will pronounce the dreadful sen-

tence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And depart you must. Oh dreadful sentence! to depart from Christ, the only source of happiness;—to depart from him, accursed, laden with the heavy curse and wrath of God, never to be removed.—To depart from him, accursed, into everlasting fire; and that the fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels!

O my young reader, stop, while this sentence sounds in your ears; stop and consider your ways. Can you bear to have it, with all its horrors, pronounced on you? If not, O turn to God, or else at that last day you may call for mercy; and God refuse to listen. His word says, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." The Lord Jesus Christ will remember your ingratitude and wickedness; and when they who sought and found him, betimes, have entered his eternal rest, you, a poor trembling, unforgiven creature, may knock at the door of mercy, then for ever shut. You may join your voice, with that of foolish millions, in the dismal cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us. Leave us not to perish."

PERSUASIVES TO

in endless woe and infinite despair. Leave us not the prey of devils, and the scorn of hell. Leave us not without one glimmering beam of hope, through a long and dreadful eternity." Alas, vain cry! the Judge will say, "I never knew you, depart from me!" O be wise! and guard, by early piety, against the terrors of that day. Now give the Lord your heart, and he will then give you a crown of life that fadeth not away.

But if you will not regard this advice, you will then know your cruelty to your own soul. Then you may sadly exclaim, "God was kind to me; he sought my happiness; and had I listened to his voice, I should have been for ever happy. The Son of God was gracious to me. O how numberless were his compassions! Had I regarded them, how blessed should I now have been! The Spirit of God was kind to me. Though grieved and resisted, how long he strove with me! O! had I yielded to his gentle influence, no creature surely had been more blessed than I. The servants of God were kind to me. Pious friends warned me, and prayed for me, and wept for me. Faithful ministers taught me, and laboured for my good; and wished for no reward, but my salvation. But I, alas! was unkind to all these, and cruel to myself. I denied them all they sought—my happiness; all they

prayed for—to see me snatched from hell O! had I had but half that compassion for myself, which others had for me, how blessed had I been now! what treasures, joys, and glories would have been mine! but ungrateful to God, and cruel to myself, I have undone my own soul, with an everlasting destruction. Wretch that I was! to have no pity on myself, while so many pitied me. Wretch that I was! to rush so madly to eternal flames, while so many strove to keep me out; and alas! so obstinately to refuse such blessings, while so many sought to make me a partaker of them!

Let me urge one reason more for your accepting the grace of God. And, O eternal God, do thou now assist me, and by thy terrors alarm that thoughtless soul, which thy love has not affected, nor thy promises allured.

Dreadful are the representations which the Scriptures give of the punishment of the ungodly. Hell is described as “a lake of fire; of fire prepared to punish the devil and his angels. The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. And the smoke

of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever : and they have no rest day nor night.”

All the delights of lost souls are gone for ever. Their pleasures, which they loved more than God, are for ever departed. Their laughing is ended ; their mirth is finished. They have done with playhouses, and card-tables, and taverns, and romances, and novels. They sing their wanton songs no more. All their delusive hopes are fled ; all their false peace is passed away. Once they deluded themselves, and hoped for heaven, while they slighted the only way that can lead a sinner thither ; but now they are dreadfully undeceived. Once they could scorn religion as unnecessary strictness ; but now, too late, they know that it was the only real wisdom. No sabbath shines on them. No season of mercy excers them with its light ; their day is ended, and a horrible night of eternal darkness has begun. Once they might have prayed ; but then they would not ; and in hell they cannot. God calls on them no more ; but has forgotten to be gracious. Jesus pities them no more ; nor will his blood ever wash away one of their sins ; though once it might have cleansed them from all. The Spirit strives with them no more. Once they would not turn ; and now they cannot. No one will ever more pray for them. No friendly voice

will ever say to them, Sinner, turn, there is mercy for you. The sermons of ministers shall no longer weary them; the admonitions of pious friends shall no longer trouble them; in hell they are fixed beyond the reach of hope, or prayer, or admonition, or mercy.

Then too, all the blessings of the next world, as well as those of this, will be for ever lost in them. God will never, for one moment, cheer them with his smile. They are for ever shut out of the heavenly city. No crown of glory will ever be theirs. Their tongues shall never join the heavenly anthems of praise, for victory and salvation. God will never wipe one tear from their eyes; or remove one pain from their hearts; nor Jesus ever lead them to fountains of heavenly pleasure.

In hell too all that is evil will meet. The unhappy creature that sinks into that dreadful prison, will have no companions but tormenting devils, and the spirits of the damned. Hardened infidels, profane blasphemers, ferocious murderers, swearers, adulterers, drunkards, with Satan and his angels, will compose the dreadful society of hell. There, alas! must they dwell, hateful, and hating one another, ever tormenting, and ever tormented, with every hellish passion, and every devilish disposition, augmented by the mad

ness of despair. O, could you endure in this world such company for a single day ! how dreadful is their lot, who must dwell with devils and the damned for ever !

Besides all this misery, that of the fire that never shall be quenched, is added. And O, who can dwell with devouring fire ? who can endure everlasting burnings ? All the torments which martyrs have suffered would be easy, compared with the torments of damnation. Many of those faithful servants of God, yielded up their lives, in the midst of dreadful burnings ; but these were not an everlasting fire. If merely a finger be burnt, or one limb be scorched, how tormenting is the pain ! yet what is this, compared with sinking in the flaming waves of hell, tormented in every part, with nothing to give a momentary relief ! yet this must be the careless sinner's dreadful portion. The Son of God himself has declared the awful truth ; and it is awful cruelty to an immortal soul, to disbelieve it, through a delusive hope, that God's threatenings will not be fulfilled. Can you then, O young sinner ! "dwell with everlasting burnings ?" you must, if you do not repent. If your hand were thrust into a flaming furnace, the torment would be great, but more supportable, if you were assured, that in a minute it should be taken out again : but if your hand

were capable of suffering so long, and you were assured that it should continue burning for life, how intolerable would your misery seem! how would you wish for death to end it! yet it would be as nothing compared with what the spirits of the damned must feel in hell. There all the soul, and, after the resurrection, all the immortal body must endure indescribable misery, and no easy part be within, or without. How dreadful is the state of those, who, dying in their sins, are dragged down by devils, to infinite despair! how would they shrink back from the mouth of the infernal dungeon! but they cannot, for the wrath of an incensed God drives them in. Alas! how infernal the society! how doleful the abode! Oh, the dread torments of eternal fire! Oh, the horrid company of hellish fiends! Where can they turn their affrighted eyes? Alas! it is every where the same sad spectacle; blackness, and darkness, and devils, and flame. O, could they die again; but die they cannot. Roll on, ye everlasting ages! but why roll on! ye will never be nearer to an end.

“Tempests of angry fire shall roll
To blast the rebel worm,
And beat upon his naked soul,
In one eternal storm.”

How dreadful a change is this, for the care-

less sinner! Here he has many comfort, and, what he esteems, pleasures; there not one. Here tender friends are his companions by day; but there are no kind companions there. By night an easy bed refreshes his weary limbs; and in calm sleep, even his sorrows are forgotten; but there he will sleep no more, to forget his misery; but writhe and toss his wretched form for ever on the lake of fire. Here, even the most distressed have something remaining to lessen their wretchedness; but it is not so there. Human kindness cannot enter; and devils cannot love. Misery will reign in every heart; despair will scowl on every face; rage and remorse distract every soul.

Ah! it will be so. To the fire that never shall be quenched, is added, the worm that will never die. The lost sinner will feel a hell within, as well as hell without. Infernal passions, like so many ravenous vultures, will tear his wretched soul. Then will he discern, for what he lost the fair inheritance of heaven. Then will he see, for what poor trifles he sunk his soul to hell. Oh! how will it wound his soul, to think of grace refused, and Christ neglected! Oh! while he blasphemes his God, how will he curse his own self-destroying folly, in choosing the way to hell, instead of that to heaven, and sin instead of religion! Oh! how bitter now will

be the remembrance of sabbaths wasted ! of mercy rejected ! of the calls to which he would not hearken ! and the admonitions he would not regard ! “Is this the hell,” may the unhappy creature say, “that I was choosing, when I turned a deaf ear to the advice of God ? Is this the fruit of my fancied wisdom ? and this eternal flame, the end of all my pleasures ? Is even this damnation my own choice ? Ah ! why have some with whom I once met, risen to glory, while confusion covers me ? why are they happy, and I miserable ? they in heaven, and I in hell ? ah ! they listened to the Saviour’s voice, and I hearkened not ; they turned to God, and I refused to turn. Now they are blest, and undone. Wretched creature ! and have I sold my soul for a moment’s base delight ? have I valued eternal glories at so little a price ? have I preferred the world and the devil to a compassionate Saviour, and gracious God ? Alas ! I have. Woe is me, all is lost ! my soul is lost ! and damnation, with all its horrors, must be mine to all eternity.”

Eternity ! eternity ! this completes the sinner’s misery. O, young sinner ! if once you sink to hell, it will make even hell itself more horrid, to think that you must be for ever there. Had a lost soul in hell, but the faintest hope of deliverance, though at

the end of as many millions of ages, as there are drops in the sea, hell would lose half its horrors ; but now, alas ! eternity, which might have been the measure of their joys, will be the only measure of their torments. There the fire never shall be quenched. Could a lost soul drop but one tear, once in ten thousand years, and do this till a sea as vast as all the seas on earth together, were filled with tears, all its sufferings, in that long, long period, would be but the beginning of eternal misery. All those millions of years of wretchedness, would bring the unhappy soul no nearer to an end of its torments, than one poor fleeting hour. Oh, infinitely miserable creatures ! that when millions of years of sorrow are past, can only say, "These flames again, these tortures again ;" and when millions more have fled, will still find their miseries beginning ; and for ever see an eternity of misery still before them. Were these sorrows to be borne, only for the most numerous course of ages, they would be more supportable ; every hour of misery would then bring on an end of all misery ; and of the most deeply undone sinner it might be said, that a time would come, when devils should cease from tormenting, and the unhappy should be at rest. But Oh, eternity ! that joyful or dreadful word for-

bids the hope. Oh, pitiable folly of unhappy men! wretched madness of miserable sinners! so wilfully to refuse a Saviour's grace, and so obstinately to plunge into perdition. And, O my young friend! is not this yours? If it is, these sorrows will soon be yours. You may forget how fast eternity comes, but will never forget how slow it goes. Oh! will you make light of Jesus still? and still refuse your heart to him? Oh! if you do, alas for you! that ever you were born. A head-ache, or a tooth-ache, or a burning fever, for one night are painful; but what is this to a painful eternity? How slowly go your hours when kept sleepless with pain! how long they seem! while you count hour after hour in sad succession, and wish the morning to appear; but there is no easy morning to follow the night of hell. What life of sinful pleasure and neglect of Christ, can ever make amends for this? How short is the trifling! and how long the sorrow! How short the pleasure! and how long the pain! How short the momentary satisfaction! and how long the dreadful punishment! O my young friend! could you now look into that flaming prison, and see the immortal spirits, that might have reached heaven, now weltering in the lake of fire; you would be bold what you, even you must be ere long,

unless you seek that grace which leads to glory. Could you see this, it might then be said to you, "Hither tend the paths of transgression. Hither a youth, spent in folly and vanity, has conducted many; here end the pleasures of sin." O, flee from destruction! flee from the tempter! flee from all that would charm you to neglect your God, for such charms allure to hell!

**XVI.—SOME OBJECTIONS TO EARLY PIETY
BRIEFLY STATED AND ANSWERED.**

PERHAPS you feel that religion is important; but urge some of those objections to early religion, which abound in this corrupt world. Permit me then to enumerate a few of these, and to give them a serious answer.

Objection 1. I am but young; I have time enough yet; I do not mean to put religion off for ever; but why should I begin with it so soon?

Answer. Young as you are, you are not too young to die; nor, if you die in sin, are you too young to be lost for ever. Young as you are, were you to die with only one of your youthful sins upon you, that one would sink you to destruction. Young as you are, you are not too young to be called to meet your God, to stand at his judgment bar and

to be fixed in heaven or hell for ever. In this island it is computed, that nearly seven thousand persons die every week ; numbers of these are the young ; and while so many graves are opening every day, may not one soon be opened for you ? Why should you promise yourself that you shall see old age, when so few comparatively reach it ? But if you should, “ he, that is in youth, reckons it too early to be converted, in old age may find it too late to be saved.” It is a dreadful fact, that few do turn to God in age ; so few as to warn the young, not to expect to be made partakers of grace and glory, unless brought to Christ in youth.

Obj. 2. Perhaps, such is your humble lot in life, that you have to object,

I am poor, and possess but little knowledge. I work hard all the week, and if I do not make Sunday a day of recreation and amusement, I can never take my pleasure ; I see too my superiors in riches and knowledge, giving themselves little concern about religion, then why should I mind it ?

Ans. You should regard religion as your chief concern, because you are not to follow the example of the great and the noble, but that of the blessed Saviour who was in this world a man of poverty and sorrows. And though you may have no day for recreation except the Sabbath, yet what will be the end

of that pleasure, which is gained by profaning that holy day? Surely, it will be everlasting bitterness and despair. Is not your soul worth more than your body? and endless ages, than a few short sorrowful years? If you knew the pleasures of religion, you would think a day in God's house better than a thousand days of mirth elsewhere; and though you may be poor in this world, would find that delight in prayer, and communion with God, which you never found in all your sinful sabbath-breaking pleasures; and which those of the great and noble, that know not God never obtained from all their riches and honours.

Obj. 3. I might attend to religion, but I have little leisure, and have much else to mind.

Ans. O, my young friend! whatever else you may have to mind, the salvation of your soul should be your first concern. If you were sure of gaining a crown and a kingdom, what would this be, compared with gaining a crown of glory and endless blessedness in heaven? To enjoy this, and escape the damnation of hell, is of ten thousand times more consequence to you, than to gain the whole world, if you were sure you could do it. The Apostle Paul counted "all things loss that he might win Christ;" nor does he now repent of his choice. Would a dying man

say, "I have so much else to mind, that I cannot find leisure to take the medicines, that, under God, may raise me from this bed of sickness? Would a condemned criminal say, "I have so much business to attend to, that I cannot find time to apply for my pardon; or to accept it if offered?" And shall a perishing sinner say, "I have no leisure to escape from hell, and seek for heaven?" What will all your studies, or labours, or cares come to, if your soul be lost? You would think a condemned criminal distracted, who would eagerly attend to other things, and slight the pardon offered him. You would say to him, "Secure your life first, then you may follow other concerns with comfort." What is the loss of life, compared with the loss of the soul? what is the folly of the man, who might trifle in view of the gallows, compared with his who trifles on the edge of hell? Secure your soul first; "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Mind this one great business. Let that one work be done, without which you are undone for ever; and then you may comfortably attend to the other business of life. If ten thousand pounds and a fine estate were offered you, would you say, "I have too much else to mind to think of this offer now?" and when God offers you

Christ, and salvation, and glory, and heaven, will you neglect a Saviour, and everlasting blessings, for things, for which you would not neglect a few hundreds of pounds, or of shillings, if offered you by a fellow-creature?

Obj. 4. I see no need of such strictness; and cannot think it necessary to make so much ado to get to heaven.

Ans. You are by nature corrupt and blind, and it is not what you may see, but what the eternal God declares, that should be your guide. Your Judge will not inquire at last, whether you fancied it right to be earnest in seeking the kingdom of God, but whether you listened to his decisions. He says, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Will you say on your death-bed, that the most prayerful and religious person that ever lived, was too earnest in getting to heaven? Do saints, in glory, think they made too much ado to get there? Do lost souls in hell, now think as they once did, that heaven was not worth so much care and thought? Do they think you can make too much ado, to flee from the everlasting burnings? O, could you see that world to which you are hastening, could you know what it is to stand before the eternal God, and hear your sentence from his lips, and could you taste, but for one short hour, the joys of the blest, or the miseries of the

damned, you would think no care, and pains, and diligence enough, in making your own salvation sure.

Obj. 5. I love the pleasures of the world; and when should I enjoy them except in youth? I cannot give them up.

Ans. But has not God declared that living in pleasure is being "dead while we live?" Cannot you give up the sinful delights of a foolish world? You must give them up, or must lose your soul. If you will not part with them now, you must at last part with them all, and then also part with every hope, and lose God, and Christ, and heavenly glory for them. If you choose them as your portion, remember you choose damnation with them.

Obj. 6. I might follow religion, but it is such a melancholy thing, that I fear it would destroy all the comfort of my life.

Ans. My young friend, what is real religion? Is it not the knowledge of God; and the enjoyment of his love and favour? This constitutes the happiness of angels. And is that which makes them happy, a melancholy thing? How you condemn yourself, and prove yourself to have a "carnal mind," which "is enmity against God." Who are they that charge religion as unhappy? Are they those who have tried what comforts it can afford? no! they will

tell you they never knew what comfort was till they found it in the paths of peace and and piety. Who is it then? It is a poor, foolish, distracted world; that speaks evil of what it knows not.

Obj. 7. Religion would expose me to the scorn and ridicule of my friends.

Ans. And what is the ridicule you fear? Is it so serious an evil, that to avoid it, you should run into perdition? Were not the blessed Saviour and his apostles scorned and derided by the world? was not he insulted with profane mockings, even in his dying moments? and did he endure such contempt for you, and will you refuse to endure a little contempt and derision for him? But if you are afraid of following Christ, lest you should be laughed at, think which is worst, the silly laugh of dying men, or the eternal frown of the eternal God. Is it not better to enter the way to heaven, though all the world were to deride and despise you for doing so, than to take the way to hell, though all the world were to applaud your choice? Will you, to avoid the scorner's laugh, lose God, and Christ, and glory?

Obj. 8. I have heard of so many sins committed by young persons who professed religion, that I am disposed to think all who make such a stir about religion are alike, and are hypocrites at heart.

Ans. What if they were? would that set aside death and judgment, to which you are hastening? would it unmake heaven and hell, one of which must be your eternal dwelling? would it render the favour of God less valuable, or his anger less dreadful? would it excuse your neglect of him? You are not to answer for them, but for yourself. But perhaps the faults that have given you disgust, were those of persons, sincere in heart, but unhappily drawn, in an unguarded moment, into sin, which has since cost them many a week of bitter grief. Now, if this were the case, should their unhappy fall be a reason with you to neglect your God? Should you cut your throat because they have cut a finger? O do not then, because some, in the main sincere, may, by sin, have wounded their own souls, cast yours into the pit of eternal perdition.

Obj. 9. But I do not believe that God will be so strict as he is represented. Nor do I believe that he will be offended with me for following my pleasures, and gratifying the inclinations of the nature he has given me.

Ans. So then your objections come to infidelity at last. You do not believe what God declares; for it is he that in his own word represents himself thus righteously strict; it is he, who there assures you, that

the end of a life of vanity and sinful pleasure is eternal death. You do not believe God, but listen to the tempter in preference to him. Thus was the world at first ruined. The tempter said to our parent, "Ye shall not surely die." The lie was believed, and they were undone. As for following the inclinations of your nature, you might safely do so, if your nature were what it was when man came from his Creator's hands. Then were his dispositions holy; but now your nature is corrupt and fallen — its dispositions "earthly, sensual, and devilish."

**XVII.—THE YOUNG READER ENTREATED TO
MAKE HIS LASTING CHOICE.**

Now you have read thus far in this little volume, what is your decision? I have endeavoured to set before you some of the pleasing, and some of the dreadful motives which urge you to embrace the gospel of the Lord, yet think not that the thousandth part has been told. Faint is the representation here attempted, of the love of Christ; the worth of the soul; the joys of heaven; or the terrors of hell. Those awful realities, in solemnity and importance, more exceed the account here given of them, than a thunder-clap exceeds the faintest whisper; or than the noon-day sun outshines

one glimmering spark. What then, again I ask you, is your decision? Have you chosen, or will you choose, the way of life? Can you see, that you have from your heart, devoted yourself to God? that you have seriously and deliberately chosen him as your God, and Christ as your Saviour? If you discern nothing of this kind, depend upon it the reason is, that you are, as yet, perishing in your sins. Transactions between God and the soul, of so much importance as these, cannot possibly have taken place without your notice and remembrance. When a servant has changed masters, is he not aware of his change? and if you had changed the service of the world and sin, for that of God and Christ, would you not know that you had done so? Alas, you cannot have a plainer proof that you are in your sins, than having no knowledge of any alteration of this kind in your views and feelings. But should I leave you thus? God forbid! I beseech you to be reconciled to Christ, and to choose the way of life.

Youth is your choosing time. The year between fifteen and twenty-five are an awfully important season. What you are at the end of that period, you will probably be for ever. Behold life and death are before you. You have to decide whether you will be a child of God, or a slave of the devil;

an inhabitant of heaven, or an outcast in hell.

By the infinite worth of religion, I beseech you make your choice. More than a thousand lives depend upon it, even a whole eternity.

By all the joys and glories of heaven, I beseech you embrace early religion. If you wish ever to enter those blessed abodes ; if you would ever obtain a crown of life eternal ; make this your choice. You may enter heavenly rest ; the crown of glory, peace, and blessedness, the sweet society of angels, and the love of God, all may be yours ; and will you refuse them all ? By these and ten thousand heavenly blessings, I entreat you, seek God as your God. Then welcome death ! welcome eternity ! welcome all the scenes beyond the grave ! welcome the great judgment ! welcome heaven !

By all the solemnities of death, I beseech you, choose the way of life. Think of your dying hour, of your physician saying, "There is no hope ;" of your friends bidding you a last farewell ; of your pulse stopping, your voice failing, your eyes closing, and your soul taking its everlasting flight. And will you, for the pleasures of a moment, undo that immortal soul ? Think of yourself stretched lifeless in a coffin ; of your grave opened ; of your funeral over ;

of your body the prey of worms and corruption ; and in a little while, that nothing will remain of you in this world but a heap of dust. O think of these things ! and by these be persuaded, to make that choice now, which will yield you satisfaction when you die.

By all the eternal Father's kindness, I beseech you, yield your heart to him. By his goodness in giving you life ; by his kindness in crowning your days with comforts ; by his patience in bearing with you, when he might justly have spurned you to hell ; by his pity in offering you salvation ; by his love in giving his beloved Son to death, for your transgressions, and frowning on him, that he might for ever smile on you ; by all this, and by all that goodness of the Lord's, which, if you had ten thousand hearts, would claim them all, I beseech you give him that one poor heart you have. As you would not be basely ungrateful, and infernally wicked to your best friend, I entreat you, no longer yield to vanity, sin, and Satan, that health and youth which God demands.

By all the compassion and love of the Son of God, I beseech you, make his service your sincere and lasting choice. By his deep humiliation and poverty ; by his poor manger, and his life of sorrows ; by his

tears and signs for wretched men ; by his bloody agony and his thorny crown ; by his bitter cross, and all his sufferings there ; I entreat you, give him yourself. Love like his demands your all for ever. By his enduring all this, to save you from the dreadful pains of eternal death, I entreat you, to accept his offers of mercy. As you would ever have an interest in his love ; as you would have him receive you to his eternal abode, O receive him now as your Saviour, your Lord, your all !

By every feeling of pity for yourself, and compassion for your own soul, I beseech you, embrace early religion. Will you not have pity on your own soul ; that deathless soul, which, at another day, you will want God and Christ to pity ? You love your body, would you hate your soul ? You love ease, O pity yourself ! and rush not forward to eternal pain. You love happiness, O be wise ! and choose eternal happiness. As you would not have all your hopes end in despair ; as you would not have all your pleasures end in sorrow ; as ever you would find pity at the bar of God, and mercy at his hands, pity yourself, and make his love your portion.

If you would not abuse the grace of God to your own destruction ; if you would not be the wilful murderer of your own soul ; I

beseech you, embrace the gospel. Had some one the power of offering you the whole world, and of saying, "I will give you all the happiness of this world, all its wealth, and all its honours, if you will give up all hope of heaven, and now consent to dwell with the devil and his angels through all eternity;" would you not tremble at the very thought of accepting such an offer? O then do not do in reality, what you would not do by such an agreement! Most persons lose their souls as completely as if they bargained for the loss. It comes to the same at last, whether you profess that you hate religion, or live careless of the blessed Son of God. To despise serious religion would sink you to hell, and to live without embracing humble piety, and obeying the gospel, will do the same; and where, in the end, is the difference.

By all the sorrows of the ungodly, be persuaded to make your instant choice. By the fire that never shall be quenched; by the worm that never dieth; by the utter darkness, which shall never be cheered with one gleam of light; by the misery that shall never know one moment's ease; by all the horrors of an eternity in hell, I beseech you, flee from the wrath to come.

By the eternal difference between those who love the Lord, and those who love him

not, I beseech you, embrace the gospel. All other distinctions will shortly vanish for ever. My young friend, when you see a person oppressed with poverty and gloom, covered with rags, and worn out with the burden of fourscore years, while you feel vigorous and gay, young and healthy, you perhaps, think with pleasure, how different is your lot from his ! A little time, and that difference will be over. It will be all over when you meet your God ; health, and youth, and vigour, will have fled away ; nothing but an interest in Jesus will avail you then. In the next world no distinction will remain, but that which springs from true religion ; and that will last for ever. Here the difference between those who love Christ, and those who slight him, is not always perceptible ; but it will be fully seen in the eternal world. Here the religious and the irreligious meet together. They dwell in the same houses ; they engage in the same business. In the house of God they sit in the same seats, and hear the same truths ; but hereafter they will be parted far asunder. The last great separating day is hastening on ; and then shall they mingle together no more. No more shall they occupy the same seats ; nor dwell in the same houses ; nor pursue the same employments. All this will be for ever done with ; and a distance, wide

indeed, will part them for eternity. O! as you would then have the distinction of belonging to Jesus, embrace his gospel now. As ever you would share the happiness of those who meet in glory, I beseech you, by coming to Christ, secure it now. How happily will they meet there, who have trodden the same path of humble religion here! How happily will the pious child meet his parents! the faithful pastor his flock! relations join relations again! and friends unite with friends!

Have you chosen early religion? or are you still for putting it off a little longer? O! if you are, be assured that delay is one of the most successful of Satan's infernal stratagems, for ruining immortal souls. Hell, it is to be feared, is filled with delayers. Multitudes, that did not intend to live and die neglecting Christ, yet have been persuaded to delay a little longer, and still a little longer, till death overtook them unprepared.

Many are eternally shut out of heaven, and eternally shut up in hell, through delaying to turn to God. Some years back, I knew a person, that once seemed much in earnest in inquiring for spiritual blessings but, ah delay! after a time he grew comparatively careless. God now visited him with a painful affliction. I saw him at that time

he seemed sensible of his sin and folly, and penitent for it. When health returned, the serious impressions that he appeared to have in illness fled away. Again he grew careless of his God. Again he delayed; but, ah! not for a long period; illness soon returned. His soul was now filled with fear and misery; and death summoned the unhappy criminal to the bar of his God. Shall I add another fact? A young person called upon an aged man afflicted with illness, and hastening to the grave; the youth spoke to him of the blessed Saviour and the precious gospel; for a few minutes he listened with serious attention, then burst into a flood of tears and exclaimed, "Ah, my young friend, had I thought on these things thirty or forty years ago, what a happy man might I now have been; but now it is too late, hell must be my portion for ever."

The Most High says, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Can you, will you, hesitate to say, "Great God, thou shalt indeed be my guide?" If you delay, consider well what you are about, and do it deliberately. Try if you can make a memorandum to this effect: "That having weighed the importance of true religion, you yet resolve to pay it no attention at present; — that you resolve, for some years more, to

plunge deeper and deeper in the service of the devil ;—that though you are persuaded your present path conducts to hell, yet that you will not so soon leave the way to hell for that to heaven ;—that though living every day on the goodness of God, you resolve to spend at least some years more in insulting him, in forgetting his love, in abusing his mercies, and in tempting him to cut you down as a cumberer of the ground, to send you to perdition ;—that though the blood of the Saviour was shed to redeem you, yet that you will spend some years more, in all manner of ingratitude to him, and in doing what you can, to defeat the end for which he died ;—and that having done all this, till, if God spare you, all the best and prime of life is past, that you will then profess to forsake these evil ways ; will declare that you are very sorry for what you have so wilfully done ; and that you then will offer to God, the wretched dregs of a life spent in serving the devil.” Could you commit to writing such horrid resolutions as these ? If you could not, O ! do not do by your actions, what you would not profess by your words ; for remember that actions speak louder than words.”

O be persuaded now to yield yourself to God ; and then next new year's day will find you walking, in the way to heaven, or land

ed there: in either case, how blessed a change, would the grace of God have made in your condition! Should you be spared for future years, how happy an alteration would it be, though you began the year in sin, ere it ended to be able to say, "God and all his love, Christ and all the riches of his grace, and all the sweet promises of Scripture, and all the glories of heaven are mine!" But perhaps before even this year shall conclude, your mortal course may finish. If it should do so, and none can tell that it will not, how infinitely important is it for you, without an hour's delay, to flee to Christ; for then how happy a year would even this, though your last year, be to you! How changed next new year's day would your state then appear! O happy change! to have begun the year on earth, and ended it in heaven.

And now, my young friend, permit me once more affectionately to remind you, that life and death are set before you. "I call heaven and earth to record against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life." The only alternative presented to you is, religion and heaven; or, want of religion and hell. Which, O! which is your choice? Again I remind you, that now is the time of mercy. Perhaps your decision this day, may be that by which your eternal state will be fix-

ed. Choose, then, the way of life, if you have not already chosen it. Peace attends it, and happiness is at its end : happiness inconceivable, unutterable, and eternal. And will you choose ? or have you chosen humble religion ? If you have, let me take you by the hand and lead you into yonder fair and spacious world. May I imagine that I see you arrived there ; or are you determined never to go thither ? May I imagine, that I see you before the throne of the Eternal, adorned with the splendours, and blest in the raptures of heaven ? Ah, is it but deception ? do you still slight the way that leads a sinner to glory and to God ? May I imagine, or is that too happy a supposition, that you ascribe your early choice of the way of life, to the blessing of the Most High on this little volume ? O ! if in any instance this be the case, blessed be God, who gave the disposition to write it ; and blessed be the day that saw it begun ! May I imagine, that you look on this as the happy day, that led you to Jesus ! and thus fixed your joy, for an eternity, where days, and years, and ages are no more. O my brother ! my sister : may I fancy that I meet you there, with your great interests and mine secured for ever ! Blessed hour ! blessed scene ! O ! in the prospect of it, let me urge you to make

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religion your earliest, only choice. It is the best that you can make. Were you prevailed on this day to obey the gospel and begin a life of early piety, how happy a day would this be to you! the best and happiest day of your life. The day that you might look back upon with most pleasure, even from a death-bed, and from the eternal world. Will you then, in God's strength, determine to make early religion your first concern, and never more to refuse the Saviour's grace? If you will, seek help from God in fervent prayer; commit your soul to Jesus; and then how happily will you, ere long, enter endless blessedness; when this vain and inconstant world, this deceitful and fleeting life, are passed away for ever. Then how happy will you be a hundred years hence, when others are as busy about this world, and you are quite forgotten, and your very tombstone hardly to be read by passing travellers! Then, in what inconceivable blessedness will your happy spirit dwell, long after, "not one wretched trace" remains of the hand that has written, or the eye that reads. Choose but religion. Give yourself to Christ, and life or death will be equally a privilege. Your last sigh will then be a forerunner of eternal praise, your last pang of eternal raptures; and the paleness of death will be seen on your countenance, but a moment before the

glories of eternal life. Yet a few years, and you, if you know the Saviour's grace, shall experience a far more transporting change than any heart can conceive. O! could we see, what thirty or forty years will discover, it might then be seen what are the effects upon your heart, of this little book. It might then be known who chose the happy, who the wretched part. Young as you may be; yet a few years and this will be known. O flee to Jesus! choose religion! then will your life be blessed; your death happy; your eternity glorious. Remember that this is the most important choice you can ever be called to make. On this it depends, whether life shall be a blessing, or a curse; — yourself an angel, or a devil; — God a friend, or an enemy; — Jesus a kind Saviour, or a dreadful Judge; — heaven your home, or hell your prison; — praise your sweet delight, or cursings and blasphemy your dreadful employment; — angels and glorified saints your beloved associates, or devils and the damned your horrid companions; — Satan a vanquished enemy, or a horrid tormentor. May the God of heaven lead you to seek your happiness in the Lord Jesus and himself! If you have made early religion your choice, may he lead you forward to the promised crown! and if you are not a partaker of that best of blessings, ever

now may he soften your heart to penitence ! and direct you to his crucified Son ! and thus, at length, bring you to that blessed world, where hope shall be exchanged for happiness ; faith for sight ; grief for gladness ; danger for safety ; death for life ; and where, to complete all, saints will be for ever with the Lord.

**XVIII. — ADVICE AND DIRECTIONS TO THE
YOUNG CHRISTIAN.**

Direction 1. BE thankful. You have peculiar reason for gratitude. Look around you, and see what multitudes die in sin ; and why are not you one of the number ? The grace of God has made you to differ. Perhaps you are poor, you are employed in the factory, the fields, or the mill, and many others are employed around you, who are unacquainted with the blessings of religion ; and why are not you, like them, poor for both worlds ? Why have you riches that will endure, when those of this world perish ? you owe it all to God.

Direction 2. Be prayerful. Cherish a spirit of devotion. There can be no religion without prayer. The word of God says, " Pray without ceasing."

Have stated times for devotion. At the very least, begin and end every day with God. Take time from sleep, sooner than

want time for prayer. Watch against formality in your devotions. It is heartfelt, not cold, though studied prayers, that are acceptable to God. Besides your intercourse with God at stated seasons, often be looking up to him ; and ever go to him in the name of Jesus. Go into your closet, or down on your knees for prayer, with as much reverence, as if you beheld the great and blessed God. Could you ascend into heaven, every morning and evening, to offer your devotions to the Most High, and then return again to earth ; what a life of holiness would you lead ! what fervent prayers and thanksgivings would you offer ! O ! consider, that you are as much before the heart-searching God now, as you would be then.

Direction 3. Be humble. "Be clothed with humility." Wear it as a garment ; let it appear in all your intercourse with God and man. "Pride goeth before destruction." Nothing would give Satan more advantage against you, than pride. This would make you self conceited, and unwilling to be reminded of your defects ; and the next step to this is ruin. Remember what you were — a child of wrath ; — what you are — a frail defective creature ; — and what you should be — holy as a saint in heaven, "perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect : " and

Direction 4. Cleave to Jesus. Make him your all in all. Let his death be your hope, his life your pattern, his promises your encouragement, his precepts your guide. Watch against every thing that would lead you to rest your hopes on any foundation, except Christ crucified. Remember, that you always were, that you still are, and ever will be, at the best, but an unprofitable servant. Keep in mind that the Lord has said, "Without me ye can do nothing." Apply to him for strength, and grace, and every good. Consider that you are not your own; that you are not to live to yourself, but to Christ; and that this should be the governing desire of your heart, that the Lord Jesus Christ may be magnified and honoured in you, in your life and death.

Direction 5. Follow holiness, and live to the glory of God. Jesus expects more than a fair profession; he expects the fruits of holiness. You have much to do for the glory of God, for the honour of Christ, for the welfare of others, and the benefit of your own soul. Though your situation should be ever so humble, yet by the silent but powerful eloquence of a life of constant holiness, you may do much to recommend the gospel.

Direction 6. Improve every help for growing in grace. Attend where the gospel

is faithfully preached. Make those your friends, who are the friends of Christ, and whose converse and counsel will help you onward to heaven. By all means seek admission into the church of Christ. Avow yourself on the Lord's side, and openly take part with his people. Search the scriptures, read them daily, with prayer for divine humiliation, and the divine blessing. Read such practical works as Baxter's *Saints' Rest*; Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*; &c.*

Direction 7. Live above the world. Consider it your chief business on earth, to glorify God, and get safe to heaven. Confess yourself a stranger and pilgrim upon earth; and keep eternity and heaven in view. "Pray as for eternity; repent as for eternity; hear as for eternity; live as for eternity; obey, and do every thing as for eternity."

Direction 8. Be faithful unto death. The young followers of Jesus are exposed to many snares; irreligious connexions are among the most fatal snares. Alas! there is too much truth in the severe observation, "How few young professors are there that will not forsake their Christian friends and their redeemer, for an ungodly wife or hus-

* "A Guide for young Disciples," by the Author of this book, is especially designed, to instruct and an-

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band." Watch against all the snares that would entangle your feet; and all the fleshly lusts that war against the soul. Keep in view the blessings promised to those who persevere. When the world tempts you aside, think of Peter's words, "Lord, to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life!" I once knew a poor man, who mentioned to me, how much happiness he had found in religion, in the early part of his Christian course. Peace with God made his life pleasant. The night and the day were alike cheerful; and fear and grief fled far from him. But words to this effect entered his mind, "What need is there of so much ado about religion?" For a time he resisted, but at length yielded to the tempter. He went backwards, and Satan triumphed. And now farewell to peace; his comforts were gone. Distress haunted him; he could not lie down at night without fear of waking in eternal torments before the morning came. He found it a bitter, as well as a guilty thing, to forsake his Redeemer. And though he was afterwards restored to God, he did not find that degree of happiness which he had experienced before his fall. "Hold fast, then, what thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

